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BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE

WITH PETERBOROUGH IN SPAIN



G·A·HENTY.

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The Bravest of the Brave

Or, With Peterborough in Spain

BY

G. A. HENTY

Author of "In the Irish Brigade" "A Knight of the White Cross"
"At the Point of the Bayonet" "The Tiger of Mysore" &c.

Illustrated

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Preface

There are few great leaders whose lives and actions have so completely fallen into oblivion as those of the Earl of Peterborough. His career as a general was a brief one, extending only over little more than a year, and yet, in that time, he showed a genius for warfare which has never been surpassed, and performed feats of daring worthy of taking their place among those of the leaders of chivalry.

The fact that they have made so slight a mark upon history is due to several reasons. In the first place, they were overshadowed by the glory and successes of Marlborough; they were performed in a cause which could scarcely be said to be that of England, and in which the public had a comparatively feeble interest; the object, too, for which he fought was frustrated, and the war was an unsuccessful one, although from no fault on his part.

But most of all, Lord Peterborough failed to attain that place in the list of British worthies to which his genius and his bravery should have raised him, because that genius was directed by no steady aim or purpose. Lord Peterborough is, indeed, one of the most striking instances in history of genius and talent wasted, and a life thrown away by want of fixed principle and by an inability or unwillingness to work with other men. He

quarrelled in turn with every party and with almost every individual with whom he came in contact; and while he himself was constantly changing his opinions, he was intolerant of all opinions differing from those which he at the moment held, and was always ready to express in the most open and offensive manner his contempt and dislike for those who differed from him. His eccentricities were great; he was haughty and arrogant, hasty and passionate, he denied his God, quarrelled with his king, and rendered himself utterly obnoxious to every party in the state.

And yet there was a vast amount of good in this strange man. He was generous and warm-hearted to a fault, kind to those in station beneath him, thoughtful and considerate for his troops, who adored him, cool in danger, sagacious in difficulties, and capable at need of evincing a patience and calmness wholly at variance with his ordinary impetuous character. Although he did not scruple to carry deception, in order to mislead an enemy, to a point vastly beyond what is generally considered admissible in war, he was true to his word and punctiliously honourable in the ordinary affairs of life.

For the historical events I have described, and for the details of Peterborough's conduct and character, I have relied chiefly upon the memoir of the earl written by Mr. C. Warburton.

G. A. HENTY.

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THE BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE

CHAPTER I

The War of Succession

“HE is an idle vagabond!” the mayor of the good town of Southampton said in high wrath—“a ne’er-do-well, and an insolent puppy; and as to you, Mistress Alice, if I catch you exchanging words with him again, ay, or nodding to him, or looking as if in any way you were conscious of his presence, I will put you on bread and water, and will send you away for six months to the care of my sister Deborah, who will, I warrant me, bring you to your senses.”

The mayor of Southampton must have been very angry indeed when he spoke in this way to his daughter Alice, who in most matters had her own way. Especially did it show that he was angry, since he so spoke in the presence of Mistress Anthony his wife, who was accustomed to have

a by no means unimportant share in any decision arrived at respecting family matters.

She was too wise a woman, however, to attempt to arrest the torrent in full flood, especially as it was a matter on which her husband had already shown a very unusual determination to have his own way. She therefore continued to work in silence, and paid no attention to the appealing glance which her daughter, a girl of fourteen, cast towards her. But although she said nothing, her husband understood in her silence an unuttered protest.

"It is no use your taking that scamp's part, Mary, in this matter. I am determined to have my own way, and the townspeople know well that when Richard Anthony makes up his mind, nothing will move him."

"I have had no opportunity to take his part, Richard," his wife said quietly; "you have been storming without interruption since you came in five minutes ago, and I have not uttered a single word."

"But you agree with me, Mary—you cannot but agree with me—that it is nothing short of a scandal for the daughter of the mayor of Southampton to be talking to a penniless young rogue like that at the garden gate."

"Alice should not have met him there," Mistress Anthony said; "but seeing that she is only fourteen years old, and the boy only sixteen, and he her second cousin, I do not see that the matter is so very shocking."

"In four more years, Mistress Anthony," the mayor said profoundly, "he will be twenty, and she will be eighteen."

"So, I suppose, Richard; I am no great head at figures, but even I can reckon that. But as at present they are only fourteen and sixteen, I repeat that I do not see that it matters—at least not so very much. Alice, do you go to your room, and remain there till I send for you."

The girl without a word rose and retired. In the reign of King William the Third implicit obedience was expected of children.

"I think, Richard," Mrs. Anthony went on when the door closed behind her daughter, "you are not acting quite with your usual wisdom in treating this matter in so serious a light, and in putting ideas into the girl's head which would probably never have entered there otherwise. Of course Alice is fond of Jack. It is only natural that she should be, seeing that he is her second cousin, and that for two years they have lived together under this roof."

"I was a fool, Mistress Anthony," the mayor said angrily, "ever to yield to your persuasions in that matter. It was unfortunate, of course, that the boy's father, the husband of your cousin Margaret, should have been turned out of his living by the Sectarians, as befell thousands of other clergymen besides him. It was still more unfortunate that when King Charles returned he did not get reinstated; but, after all, that was Margaret's business and not mine; and if she was fool enough

to marry a pauper, and he wellnigh old enough to be her father—well, as I say, it was no business of mine.”

“He was not a pauper, Richard, and you know it; and he made enough by teaching to keep him and Margaret comfortably till he broke down and died three years ago, and poor Margaret followed him to the grave a year later. He was a good man—in every way a good man.”

“Tut, tut! I am not saying he wasn’t a good man. I am only saying that, good or bad, it was no business of mine; and then nothing will do but I must send for the boy and put him in my business. And a nice mess he made of it—an idler, more careless apprentice no cloth merchant, especially one who stood well with his fellow citizens, and who was on the highway to becoming mayor of his native city, was ever crossed with.”

“I think he was hardly as bad as that, Richard. I don’t think you were ever quite fair to the boy.”

“Not fair, Mary! I am surprised at you. In what way was I not quite fair?”

“I don’t think you meant to be unfair, Richard; but you see you were a little—just a little—prejudiced against him from the first; because, instead of jumping at your offer to apprentice him to your trade, he said he should like to be a sailor.”

“Quite enough to prejudice me, too, madam. Why, there are scores of sons of respectable burghesses of this town who would jump at such an offer; and here this penniless boy turns up his nose at it.”

"It was foolish, no doubt, Richard; but you see the boy had been reading the lives of admirals and navigators—he was full of life and spirit—and I believe his father had consented to his going to sea."

"Full of life and spirit, madam!" the mayor repeated more angrily than before; "let me tell you it is these fellows who are full of life and adventure who come to the gallows. Naturally I was offended; but as I had given you my word I kept to it. Every man in Southampton knows that the word of Richard Anthony is as good as his bond. I bound him apprentice, and what comes of it? My foreman, Andrew Carson, is knocked flat on his back in the middle of the shop."

Mrs. Anthony bit her lips to prevent herself from smiling.

"We will not speak any more about that, Richard," she said; "because, if we did, we should begin to argue. You know it is my opinion, and always has been, that Carson deliberately set you against the boy; that he was always telling you tales to his disadvantage; and although I admit that the lad was very wrong to knock him down when he struck him, I think, my dear, I should have done the same had I been in his place."

"Then, madam," Mr. Anthony said solemnly, "you would have deserved what happened to him—that you should be turned neck and crop into the street."

Mrs. Anthony gave a determined nod of her head—a nod which signified that she should have

a voice on that point. However, seeing that in her husband's present mood it was better to say no more, she resumed her work.

While this conversation had been proceeding, Jack Stilwell, who had fled hastily when surprised by the mayor as he was talking to his daughter at the back gate of the garden, had made his way down to the wharves, and there, seating himself upon a pile of wood, had stared moodily at the tract of mud extending from his feet to the strip of water far away. His position was indeed an unenviable one. As Mrs. Anthony had said, his father was a clergyman of the Church of England, the vicar of a snug living in Lincolnshire, but he had been cast out when the Parliamentarians gained the upper hand, and his living was handed over to a Sectarian preacher. When, after years of poverty, King Charles came to the throne, the dispossessed minister thought that as a matter of course he should be restored to his living; but it was not so. As in hundreds of other cases the new occupant conformed at once to the new laws, and the Rev. Thomas Stilwell, having no friends or interest, was like many another clergyman left out in the cold.

But by this time he had settled at Oxford—at which university he had been educated—and was gaining a not uncomfortable livelihood by teaching the sons of citizens. Late in life he married Margaret Ullathorpe, who, still a young woman, had, during a visit to some friends at Oxford, made his acquaintance. In spite of the disparity of years

the union was a happy one. One son was born to them, and all had gone well until a sudden chill had been the cause of Mr. Stilwell's death, his wife surviving him only one year. Her death took place at Southampton, where she had moved after the loss of her husband, having no further tie at Oxford, and a week later Jack Stilwell found himself domiciled at the house of Mr. Anthony.

It was in vain that he represented to the cloth merchant that his wishes lay towards a seafaring life, and that, although his father had wished him to go into the ministry, he had given way to his entreaties. Mr. Anthony sharply pooh-poohed the idea, and insisted that it was nothing short of madness to dream of such a thing when so excellent an opportunity of learning a respectable business was open to him.

At any other time Jack would have resisted stoutly, and would have run away and taken his chance rather than agree to the proposition; but he was broken down by grief at his mother's death. Incapable of making a struggle against the obstinacy of Mr. Anthony, and scarce caring what became of himself, he signed the deed of apprenticeship which made him for five years the slave of the cloth merchant. Not that the latter intended to be anything but kind, and he sincerely believed that he was acting for the good of the boy in taking him as his apprentice; but as Jack recovered his spirits and energy, he absolutely loathed the trade to which he was bound. Had it not been for Mistress Anthony and Alice he would have braved

the heavy pains and penalties which in those days befell disobedient apprentices, and would have run away to sea; but their constant kindness, and the fact that his mother with her dying breath had charged him to regard her cousin as standing in her place, prevented him from carrying the idea which he often formed into effect.

In the shop his life was wretched. He was not stupid as his master asserted; for indeed in other matters he was bright and clever, and his father had been well pleased with the progress he made with his studies; but, in the first place, he hated his work, and in the second, every shortcoming and mistake was magnified and made the most of by the foreman, Andrew Carson. This man had long looked to be taken into partnership, and finally to succeed his master, seeing that the latter had no sons, and he conceived a violent jealousy of Jack Stilwell, in whose presence, as a prime favourite of Mistress Anthony and of her daughter, he thought he foresaw an overthrow of his plans.

He was not long in effecting a breach between the boy and his master—for Jack's carelessness and inattention gave him plenty of opportunities—and Mr. Anthony ere long viewed the boy's errors as acts of wilful disobedience. This state of things lasted for two years until the climax came, when, as Mr. Anthony had said to his wife, Jack, upon the foreman attempting to strike him, had knocked the latter down in the shop.

Mr. Anthony's first impulse was to take his apprentice before the justices and to demand con-

dign punishment for such an act of flagrant rebellion; but a moment's reflection told him that Jack, at the end of his punishment, would return to his house, where his wife would take his part as usual, and the quarrels which had frequently arisen on his account would be more bitter than before.

It was far better to get rid of him at once, and he accordingly ordered him from the shop, tore up his indenture before his eyes, and bade him never let him see his face again. For the first few hours Jack was delighted at his freedom. He spent the day down on the wharves talking to the fishermen and sailors. There were no foreign-bound ships in the port, and he had no wish to ship on board a coaster; he therefore resolved to wait until a vessel sailing for foreign ports should leave.

He had no money; but a few hours after he left the shop Mrs. Anthony's maid found him on the wharf, and gave him a letter from her mistress. In this was enclosed a sum of money sufficient to last him for some time, and an assurance that she did not share her husband's anger against him.

"I have no doubt, my dear Jack," she said, "that in time I could heal the breach and could arrange for you to come back again, but I think perhaps it is better as it is. You would never make a clothier, and I don't think you would ever become mayor of Southampton. I know what your wishes are, and I think that you had better follow them out. Alice is heartbroken over the affair, but I assure her that it will all turn out for the best. I cannot ask you to come up to the house; but

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whenever you have settled on anything leave a note with Dorothy for me, and I will come down with Alice to see you and say goodbye to you. I will see that you do not go without a proper outfit."

It was to deliver this letter that Jack had gone up to the back gate; and seeing Alice in the garden they had naturally fallen into conversation at the gate, when the mayor, looking out from the window of his warehouse, happened to see them, and went out in the greatest wrath to put a stop to the conversation.

Jack had indeed found a ship; she had come in from Holland with cloth and other merchandise, and was after she was discharged to sail for the colonies with English goods. She would not leave the port for some weeks; but he had seen the captain, who had agreed to take him as ship's boy. Had the mayor been aware that his late apprentice was on the point of leaving he would not have interfered with his intention; but as he peremptorily ordered that his name was not to be mentioned before him, and as Mrs. Anthony had no motive in approaching the forbidden subject, the mayor remained in ignorance that Jack was about to depart on a distant voyage.

One day, on going down to the town hall, he found an official letter waiting him; it was an order from government empowering justices of the peace to impress such men as they thought fit, with the only restriction that men entitled to vote for members of parliament were exempted. This tremendous

power had just been legalized by an act of parliament. A more iniquitous act never disgraced our statutes, for it enabled justices of the peace to spite any of their poorer neighbours against whom they had a grudge, and to ship them off to share in the hardships of Marlborough's campaign in Germany and the Low Countries, or in the expedition now preparing for Spain.

At that time the army was held in the greatest dislike by the English people. The nation had always been opposed to a standing force, and it was only now that the necessities of the country induced them to tolerate it. It was, however, recruited almost entirely from reckless and desperate men. Criminals were allowed to commute sentences of imprisonment for service in the army, and the gates of the prisons were also opened to insolvent debtors consenting to enlist. But all the efforts of the recruiting sergeants, aided by such measures as these, proved insufficient to attract a sufficient number of men to keep up the armies at the required strength.

Pressing had always existed to a certain extent; but it had been carried on secretly, and was regarded as illegal. Therefore, as men must be had, the law giving justices the authority and power to impress any men they might select, with the exception of those who possessed a vote for members of parliament, was passed with the approval of parties on both sides of the House of Commons.

There was indeed great need for men. England had allied herself with Austria and Holland in op-

position to France, the subject of dispute being the succession to the crown of Spain, England's feelings in the matter being further embittered by the recognition by Louis XIV of the Pretender as King of England. Therefore, although her interests were not so deeply engaged in the question as to the succession to the throne of Spain as were those of the continental powers, she threw herself into the struggle with ardour.

The two claimants to the throne of Spain were the Archduke Charles, second son of Leopold Emperor of Austria, and Philip Duke of Anjou, a younger grandson of Louis. On the marriage of the French king with Maria Theresa, the sister of Charles II of Spain, she had formally renounced all claims to the succession, but the French king had nevertheless continued from time to time to bring them forward. Had these rights not been renounced Philip would have had the best claim to the Spanish throne, the next of kin after him being Charles of Austria.

During the later days of the King of Spain all Europe had looked on with the most intense interest at the efforts which the respective parties made for their candidates. Whichever might succeed to the throne the balance of power would be destroyed; for either Austria and Spain united, or France and Spain united, would be sufficient to overawe the rest of the Continent. Louis XIV lulled the fears of the Austrian party by suggesting a treaty of partition to the Dutch states and William the Third of England.

By this treaty it was agreed that the Archduke Charles was to be acknowledged successor to the crowns of Spain, the Indies, and the Netherlands; while the dauphin, as the eldest son of Maria Theresa, should receive the kingdom of Naples and Sicily, with the Spanish province of Guipuscoa and the duchy of Milan, in compensation of his abandonment of other claims. When the conditions of this treaty became known they inspired natural indignation in the minds of the people of the country which had thus been arbitrarily allotted, and the dying Charles of Spain was infuriated by this conspiracy to break up and divide his dominion. His jealousy of France would have led him to select the Austrian claimant; but the emperor's undisguised greed for a portion of the Spanish empire, and the overbearing and unpleasant manner of the Austrian ambassador in the Spanish court, drove him to listen to the overtures of Louis, who had a powerful ally in Cardinal Portocarrero, Archbishop of Toledo, whose influence was all-powerful with the king. The cardinal argued that the grandson of Maria Theresa could not be bound by her renunciation, and also that it had only been made with a view to keep separate the French and Spanish monarchies, and that if a descendant of hers, other than the heir to the throne of France, were chosen, this condition would be carried out.

Finally, he persuaded Charles, a month before his death, to sign a will declaring Philip Duke of Anjou, grandson of his brother-in-law Louis XIV, sole heir of the Spanish empire. The will was kept

secret till the death of the king, and was then publicly proclaimed. Louis accepted the bequest in favour of his grandson, and Philip was declared king in Spain and her dependencies.

The greatest indignation was caused in England, Holland, and the empire, at this breach by the King of France of the treaty of partition, of which he himself had been the author. England and Holland were unprepared for war, and therefore bided their time; but Austria at once commenced hostilities by directing large bodies of troops, under Prince Eugene, into the duchy of Milan, and by inciting the Neapolitans to revolt. The young king was at first popular in Spain; but Cardinal Portocarrero, who exercised the real power of the state, by his overbearing temper, his avarice, and his shameless corruption, speedily alienated the people from their monarch. Above all, the cardinal was supposed to be the tool of the French king, and to represent the policy which had for its object the dismemberment of the Spanish monarchy and the aggrandizement of France.

That Louis had such designs was undoubted, and, if properly managed and bribed, Portocarrero would have been a pliant instrument in his hands; but the cardinal was soon estranged by the constant interference by the French agents in his own measures of government, and therefore turned against France that power of intrigue which he had recently used in her favour. He pretended to be devoted to France, and referred even the most minute details of government to Paris for appro-

bation, with the double view of disgusting Louis with the government of Spain and of enraging the Spanish people at the constant interference of Louis.

Philip, however, found a new and powerful ally in the hearts of the people by his marriage with Maria Louisa, daughter of the Duke of Savoy—a beautiful girl of fourteen years old, who rapidly developed into a graceful and gifted woman, and became the darling of the Spanish people, and whose intellect, firmness, and courage guided and strengthened her weak but amiable husband. For a time the power of Spain and France united overshadowed Europe, the trading interests of England and Holland were assailed, and a French army assembled close to the Flemish frontier.

The indignation of the Dutch overcame their fears, and they yielded to the quiet efforts which King William was making, and combined with England and Austria in a grand alliance against France, the object of the combination being to exclude Louis from the Netherlands and West Indies, and to prevent the union of the crowns of France and Spain upon the same head. King William might not have obtained from the English parliament a ratification of the alliance, had not Louis just at this moment acknowledged the son of the ex-King James as King of England. This insult roused the spirit of the English people, the House of Commons approved the triple alliance, and voted large supplies.

King William died just after seeing his favourite

project successful, and was succeeded by Queen Anne, who continued his policy. The Austrian Archduke Charles was recognized by the allies as King of Spain, and preparation made for war.

An English army was landed near Cadiz; but the Spaniards showed no sign of rising in favour of Charles, and, after bringing great discredit on themselves and exciting the animosity of the Spaniards by gross misconduct, the English army embarked again. Some treasure ships were captured, and others sunk in the harbour of Vigo, but the fleet was no more effective than the army. Admiral Sir John Munden was cashiered for treachery or cowardice on the coast of Spain, and four captains of vessels in the gallant Benbow's West Indian fleet were either dismissed or shot for refusing to meet the enemy and for abandoning their chief.

In 1703 little was done in the way of fighting, but the allies received an important addition of strength by the accession of Portugal to their ranks. In 1704 the allies made an attempt upon the important city of Barcelona. It was believed that the Catalans would have declared for Charles; but the plot by which the town was to be given up to him was discovered on the eve of execution, and the English force re-embarked on their ships. Their success was still less on the side of Portugal, where the Duke of Berwick, who was in command of the forces of King Philip, defeated the English and Dutch under the Duke of Schomberg and captured many towns.

The Portuguese rendered the allies but slight as-

sistance. These reverses were, however, balanced by the capture of Gibraltar on the 21st of June by the fleet under Sir George Rooke, and a small land force under Prince George of Hesse. Schomberg was recalled and Lord Galway took the command; but he succeeded no better than his predecessor, and affairs looked but badly for the allies, when the Duke of Marlborough, with the English and allied troops in Germany, inflicted the first great check upon the power and ambition of Louis XIV by the splendid victory of Blenheim.

This defeat of the French had a disastrous effect upon the fortunes of Philip. He could no longer hope for help from his grandfather, for Louis was now called upon to muster his whole strength on his eastern frontier for the defence of his own dominion, and Philip was forced to depend upon his partisans in Spain only. The partisans of Charles at once took heart. The Catalans had never been warm in the cause of Philip; the crowns of Castille, Arragon, and Catalonia had only recently been united, and a dangerous jealousy existed between these provinces. The Castellians were devoted adherents of Philip, and this in itself was sufficient to set Catalonia and Arragon against him.

The English government had been informed of this growing discontent in the north of Spain, and sent out an emissary to enquire into the truth of the statement. As his report confirmed all that they had heard, it was decided in the spring of 1705 to send out an expedition which was to effect a landing

in Catalonia, and would, it was hoped, be joined by all the people of that province and Arragon. By the efforts and patronage of the Duchess of Marlborough, who was all-powerful with Queen Anne, the Earl of Peterborough was named to the command of the expedition.

The choice certainly appeared a singular one, for hitherto the earl had done nothing which would entitle him to so distinguished a position. Charles Mordaunt was the eldest son of John Lord Mordaunt, Viscount Avalon, a brave and daring cavalier, who had fought heart and soul for Charles, and had been tried by Cromwell for treason, and narrowly escaped execution. On the Restoration, as a reward for his risk of life and fortune, and for his loyalty and ability, he was raised to the peerage.

His son Charles inherited none of his father's steadfastness. Brought up in the profligate court of Charles the Second he became an atheist, a scoffer at morality, and a republican. At the same time he had many redeeming points. He was brilliant, witty, energetic, and brave. He was generous and strictly honourable to his word. He was filled with a burning desire for adventure, and, at the close of 1674, when in his seventeenth year, he embarked in Admiral Torrington's ship, and proceeded to join as a volunteer Sir John Narborough's fleet in the Mediterranean, in order to take part in the expedition to restrain and revenge the piratical depredations of the barbarous states of Tripoli and Algiers.

He distinguished himself on the 14th of January, 1675, in an attack by the boats of the fleet upon four corsair men-o'-war moored under the very guns of the castle and fort of Tripoli. The exploit was a successful one, the ships were all burned, and most of their crews slain. Another encounter with the fleet of Tripoli took place in February, when the pirates were again defeated, and the dey forced to grant all the English demands.

In 1677 the fleet returned to England, and with it Mordaunt, who had during his absence succeeded to his father's title and estates, John Lord Mordaunt having died on the 5th of June, 1675. Shortly after his return to England Lord Mordaunt, though still but twenty years old, married a daughter of Sir Alexander Fraser. But his spirit was altogether unsuited to the quiet enjoyment of domestic life, and at the end of September, 1678, he went out as a volunteer in his majesty's ship *Bristol*, which was on the point of sailing for the Mediterranean to take part in an expedition fitting out for the relief of Tangier, then besieged by the Moors. Nothing, however, came of the expedition, and Mordaunt returned to England in the autumn of 1679.

In June, 1680, he again sailed for Tangier with a small expedition commanded by the Earl of Plymouth. The expedition succeeded in throwing themselves into the besieged town, and continued the defence with vigour, and Mordaunt again distinguished himself; but he soon wearied of the monotony of a long siege, and before the end of the year found opportunity to return to England,

where he plunged into politics and became one of the leaders of the party formed to exclude the Duke of York from the throne.

Although a close friend of Lord Russell and Algernon Sidney he had fortunately for himself not been admitted to the fatal privilege of their private councils, and therefore escaped the fate which befell them. He continued his friendship with them to the last, and accompanied Algernon Sidney to the scaffold. But even while throwing himself heart and soul into politics he was continually indulging in wild freaks which rendered him the talk of the town.

On the accession of King James he made his first speech in the House of Peers against a standing army, and distinguished himself alike by the eloquence and violence of his language. He was now under the displeasure of the court, and his profuse generosity had brought him into pecuniary trouble. In 1686, therefore, he quitted England with the professed intention of accepting a command in the Dutch fleet, then about to sail for the West Indies. When he arrived in Holland, however, he presented himself immediately to the Prince of Orange, and first among the British nobility boldly proposed to William an immediate invasion of England. He pushed his arguments with fiery zeal, urged the disaffection of all classes, the hatred of the Commons, the defection of the Lords, the alarm of the Church, and the wavering loyalty of the army.

William, however, was already informed of these

facts, and was not to be hurried. Mordaunt remained with him till, on the 20th of October, 1688, he sailed for England. The first commission that King William signed in England was the appointment of Lord Mordaunt as lieutenant-colonel of horse, and raising a regiment he rendered good service at Exeter. As soon as the Revolution was completed, and William and Mary ascended the throne, Mordaunt was made a privy-councillor and one of the lords of the bed-chamber, and in April, 1689, he was made first commissioner of the treasury, and advanced to the dignity of Earl of Monmouth. In addition to the other offices to which he was appointed he was given the colonelcy of the regiment of horse guards.

His conduct in office showed in brilliant contrast to that of the men with whom he was placed. He alone was free from the slightest suspicion of corruption and venality, and he speedily made enemies among his colleagues by the open contempt which he manifested for their gross corruption.

Although he had taken so prominent a part in bringing King William to England, Monmouth soon became mixed up in all sorts of intrigues and plots. He was already tired of the reign of the Dutch king, and longed for a commonwealth. He was constantly quarrelling with his colleagues, and whenever there was a debate in the House of Lords Monmouth took a prominent part on the side of the minority. In 1692 he went out with his regiment of horse guards to Holland, and fought bravely at the battle of Steenkirk. The campaign was a

failure, and in October he returned to England with the king.

For two years after this he lived quietly, devoting his principal attention to his garden and the society of wits and men of letters. Then he again appeared in parliament, and took a leading part in the movement in opposition to the crown, and inveighed in bitter terms against the bribery of persons in power by the East India Company, and the venality of many members of parliament, and even the ministry. His relations with the king were now of the coldest kind, and he became mixed up in a Jacobite plot. How far he was guilty in the matter was never proved. Public opinion certainly condemned him, and by a vote of the Peers he was deprived of all his employments and sent to the Tower. The king, however, stood his friend, and released him at the end of the session.

In 1697, by the death of his uncle, Charles became Earl of Peterborough, and passed the next four years in private life, emerging only occasionally to go down to the House of Peers and make fiery onslaughts upon abuses and corruption. In the course of these years, both in parliament and at court, he had been sometimes the friend, sometimes the opponent of Marlborough; but he had the good fortune to be a favourite of the duchess, and when the time came that a leader was required for the proposed expedition to Spain, she exerted herself so effectually that she procured his nomination.

Hitherto his life had been a strange one. Indolent and energetic by turns, restless and intrigu-

ing, quarrelling with all with whom he came in contact, burning with righteous indignation against corruption and misdoing, generous to a point which crippled his finances seriously, he was a puzzle to all who knew him, and had he died at this time he would only have left behind him the reputation of being one of the most brilliant, gifted, and honest, but at the same time one of the most unstable, eccentric, and ill-regulated spirits of his time.

CHAPTER II

Impressed

WHEN the mayor of Southampton opened the official document empowering and requesting him to obtain recruits for the queen's service he was not greatly pleased. This sort of thing would give a good deal of trouble, and would assuredly not add to his popularity. He saw at once that he would be able to oblige many of his friends by getting rid of people troublesome to them, but with this exception where was he to find the recruits the queen required? There were, of course, a few never-do-wells in the town who could be packed off, to the general satisfaction of the inhabitants, but beyond this everyone taken would have friends and relations who would cry out and protest.

It was likely to be a troublesome business, and the mayor threw down the paper on the table before him. Then suddenly his expression changed. He had been thinking of obliging his friends by sending off persons troublesome to them, but he had not thought of his own case. Here was the very thing; he would send off this troublesome lad to fight for the queen; and, whether he went to the Low Countries under Marlborough, or to Spain

with this new expedition which was being prepared, it was very unlikely that he would ever return to trouble him.

He was only sixteen, indeed, but he was strong and well grown, and much fitter for service than many of those who would be sent. If the young fellow stopped here he would always be a trouble, and a bone of contention between himself and his wife. Besides, for Alice's sake, it was clearly his duty to get the fellow out of the way. Girls, Mr. Anthony considered, were always falling in love with the very last people in the world with whom they should do so, and out of sheer contrariety it was more than possible that Alice might take a fancy for this penniless vagabond, and if she did, Mrs. Anthony was fool enough to support her in her folly.

Of course there would be trouble with his wife when she found what had happened to the lad—for the mayor did not deceive himself for a moment by the thought that he would be able to conceal from his wife the cause of Jack's absence; he was too well aware of Mrs. Anthony's power of investigation. Still, after it was done it could not be undone, and it was better to have one domestic storm than a continuation of foul weather.

Calling in his clerk the mayor read over to him the order he had received, and bade him turn to the court book and make out a list of the names of forty young men who had been charged before him with offences of drunkenness, assault, battery, and rioting.

“When you have made up the list, Johnson, you will go round to the aldermen and inform them of the order that I have received from the government, and you can tell them that if there are any persons they know, of whom they consider that Southampton would be well rid, if they will send the names to me I will add them to the list. Bid them not to choose married men, if it can be avoided, for the town would be burdened with the support of their wives and families. Another ten names will do. The letter which accompanies the order says that from my well-known zeal and loyalty it is doubted not that Southampton will furnish a hundred men, but if I begin with fifty that will be well enough, and we can pick out the others at our leisure.”

By the afternoon the list was filled up. One of the aldermen had inserted the name of a troublesome nephew, another that of a foreman with whom he had had a dispute about wages, and who had threatened to proceed against him in the court. Some of the names were inserted from mere petty spite; but with scarce an exception the aldermen responded to the invitation of the mayor, and placed on the list the name of someone whom they, or Southampton, would be the better without.

When the list was completed the mayor struck out one of the first names inserted by his clerk and inserted that of John Stilwell in its place. His instructions were that he was to notify to an officer, who would arrive with a company of soldiers on the following day, the names of those whom he

deemed suitable for the queen's service. The officer after taking them was to embark them on board one of the queen's cutters, which would come round from Portsmouth for the purpose, and would convey them to Dover, where a camp was being formed and the troops assembling.

Upon the following day the company marched into the town, and the officer in command, having seen his men billeted among the citizens, called upon the mayor.

"Well, Mr. Mayor," he said, "I hope you have a good list of recruits for me. I don't want to be waiting here, for I have to go on a similar errand to other towns. It is not a job I like, I can tell you, but it is not for me to question orders."

"I have a list of fifty men, all active and hearty fellows, who will make good soldiers," the mayor said.

"And of whom, no doubt, Southampton will be well rid," the officer said with a laugh. "Truly, I pity the Earl of Peterborough, for he will have as rough a body of soldiers as ever marched to war. However, it is usually the case that the sort of men who give trouble at home are just those who, when the time comes, make the best fighters. I would rather have half a dozen of your reckless blades, when the pinch comes, than a score of honest ploughboys. How do you propose that I shall take them?"

"That I will leave entirely to you," the mayor said; "here is a list of the houses where they lodge. I will place the town watch at your dis-

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posal to show you the way and to point out the men to you."

"That will be all I shall require," the officer said; "but you can give me a list of those who are most likely to give trouble. These I will pounce upon and get on board ship first of all. When they are secured I will tell my men off in parties, each with one of your constables to point out the men, and we will pick them up so many every evening. It is better not to break into houses and seize them; for, although we are acting legally and under the authority of act of parliament, it is always as well to avoid giving cause of complaint, which might tend to excite a feeling against the war and make the government unpopular, and which, moreover, might do you harm with the good citizens, and do me harm with those above me. I am sure you agree with me."

"Quite so, quite so," the mayor said hastily; "you speak very prudently and well, sir. I hope you will honour me by taking up your abode in my house during your stay here; but may I ask you not to allow my wife, who is inquisitive by nature, to see the list with which I furnish you. Women are ever meddling in matters which concern them not."

"I understand," the officer said with a wink, "there are names on the list of which your wife would not approve. I have known the same thing happen before. But never fear, the list shall be kept safe; and, indeed, it were better that nothing were said of my business in the town, for if this

get abroad, some of those whose conscience may tell them that they will be likely to be chosen for service, might very well slip off and be out of the way until they hear that I and my men have left."

Two days later, when, as the evening was falling, Jack Stilwell was walking up from the wharf, where he had been watching the unlading of the vessel in which he was to sail, he came upon a group of four or five soldiers standing at a corner. Then a voice, which he recognized as that of the foreman, Richard Carson, said:

"That is your man, officer;" and the soldiers made a sudden rush upon him.

Taken by surprise he nevertheless struggled desperately, but a heavy blow with a staff fell on the back of his head, and for a time he knew nothing more. When he recovered his consciousness he was lying almost in complete darkness, but by the faint gleam of the lantern he discovered that he was in the hold of a ship. Several other men were sitting or lying near him. Some of them were cursing and swearing, others were stanching the blood which flowed from various cuts and gashes.

"What does all this mean?" he asked as he somewhat recovered himself.

"It means," said one, "that we are pressed to serve as soldiers. I made a fight for it, and just as they had got the handcuffs on some citizens came up and asked what was doing, and the sergeant said: 'It is quite legal. We hold the mayor's warrant to impress this man for service in the army; there is a constable here who will

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tell you we are acting on authority, and if any interfere it will be worse for them.'"

Jack heard the news in silence. So, he had been pressed by a warrant of the mayor, he was the victim of the spite of his late employer. But his thoughts soon turned from this by the consciousness that his shirt and clothes were soaked with blood, and putting his hand to the back of his head he found a great lump from which the blood was still slowly flowing. Taking off his neck handkerchief he bound it round his head and then lay down again. He tried to think, but his brain was weak and confused, and he presently fell into a sound sleep, from which he was not aroused by the arrival of another batch of prisoners.

It was morning when he awoke, and he found that he had now nearly twenty companions in captivity. Some were walking up and down like caged animals, others were loudly bewailing their fate, some sat moody and silent, while some bawled out threats of vengeance against those they considered responsible for their captivity. A sentry with a shouldered musket was standing at the foot of the steps, and from time to time some sailors passed up and down. Jack went up to one of these.

"Mate," he said, "could you let us have a few buckets of water down here? In the first place we are parched with thirst, and in the second we may as well try to get off some of the blood which, from a good many of us, has been let out pretty freely."

"Well, you seem a reasonable sort of chap," the sailor said, "and to take things coolly. That's the

way, my lad; when the king, or the queen now—it's all the same thing—has once got his hand on you it's of no use kicking against it. I have been pressed twice myself, so I know how you feel. Here, mates," he said to two of the other sailors, "lend a hand and get a bucket of fresh water and a pannikin, and half a dozen buckets of salt water, and let these lads have a drink and a wash."

It was soon done. The prisoners were all glad of the drink, but few cared to trouble about washing. Jack, however, took possession of a bucket, stripped to the waist, and had a good wash. The salt water made his wound smart, but he continued for half an hour bathing it, and at the end of that time felt vastly fresher and better. Then he soaked his shirt in the water, and as far as possible removed the broad stains of blood which stiffened it. Then he wrung it out and hung it up to dry, and, putting on his coat, sat down and thought matters over.

He had never had the idea of entering the army, for the measures taken to fill the ranks rendered the military service distasteful in the extreme to the English people. Since the days of Agincourt the English army had never gained any brilliant successes abroad, and there was consequently none of that national pride, which now exists, in its bravery and glorious history.

Still, Jack reflected, it did not make much difference to him whether he became a soldier or a sailor. He had longed to see the world, to share in deeds of adventure, and, above all, to escape

from the dreary drudgery of the clothier's shop. These objects would be attained as well in the army as in the navy; and, indeed, now that he thought of it, he preferred the active service which he would see under Marlborough or Peterborough to the monotony of a long sea voyage. At any rate, it was clear that remonstrance or resistance were vain. He as well as others were aware of the law which had just been passed, giving magistrates the power of impressing soldiers for the service, and he felt, therefore, that, although his impressment had no doubt been dictated by the private desire of the mayor to get him out of the way, it was yet strictly legal, and that it would be useless his making any protest against it. He resolved, therefore, to make the best of things, and to endeavour to win the goodwill of his officers by prompt and cheerful acquiescence in the inevitable.

Presently some sailors brought down a tray with a number of hunks of black bread, a large pot filled with a sort of broth, and a score of earthenware mugs. Jack at once dipped one of the mugs into the pot, and, taking a hunch of bread, sat down to his breakfast. A few others followed his example, but most of them were too angry or too dispirited to care about eating; and, indeed, it seemed to them that their refusal to partake of the meal was a sort of protest against their captivity.

Half an hour afterwards the sailors removed the food; and many of those who had refused to touch it soon regretted bitterly that they had not done so, for as the time went on, hunger began to make itself

felt. It was evening before the next meal, consisting of black bread and a great piece of salt beef, was brought down. This time there were no abstinences. As the evening wore on fresh batches of prisoners were brought in, until, by midnight, the number was raised to fifty. Many of them had been seriously knocked about in their capture, and Jack, who had persuaded his friend the sailor to bring down three or four more buckets of salt water, did his best, by bathing and bandaging their wounds, to put them at their ease.

In the morning he could see who were his companions in misfortune. Many of them he knew by sight as loafers on the wharves and as troublesome or riotous characters. Three or four were men of different type. There were two or three respectable mechanics—men who had had, at various times, drawn upon them the dislikes of the great men of the town by insisting on their rights; and there were two idle young fellows of a higher class, who had vexed their friends beyond endurance.

Presently the officer in charge of the recruiting party, who had now come on board, came down into the hold. He was at once assailed with a storm of curses and angry remonstrances.

“Look here, my lads,” he said, raising his hand for silence, “it is of no use your going on like this, and I warn you that the sooner you make up your minds that you have got to serve her majesty the better for you, because that you have got to do it is certain. You have all been impressed according to act of parliament, and there is no getting

out of it. It's your own fault that you got those hard knocks that I see the marks of, and you will get more if you give any more trouble. Now, those who choose to agree at once to serve her majesty can come on deck."

Jack at once stepped forward.

"I am ready to serve, sir," he said.

"That's right," the officer replied heartily; "you are a lad of spirit, I can see, and will make a good soldier. You look young yet, but that's all in your favour; you will be a sergeant at an age when others are learning their recruit drill. Now, who's the next?"

Some half-dozen of the others followed Jack's example, but the rest were still too sore and angry to be willing to do anything voluntarily.

Jack leapt lightly up on deck and looked round; the cutter was already under weigh, and with a gentle breeze was running along the smooth surface of Southampton Waters, the ivy-covered ruins of Netley Abbey were abreast of them, and behind was the shipping of the port.

"Well, young un," an old sergeant said, "so I suppose you have agreed to serve the queen?"

"As her majesty was so pressing," Jack replied with a smile, "you see I had no choice in the matter."

"That's right," the sergeant said kindly; "always keep up your spirits, lad. Care killed a cat, you know. You are one of the right sort, I can see, but you are young to be pressed. How old are you?"

"Sixteen," Jack replied.

"Then they had no right to take you," the sergeant said; "seventeen's the earliest age, and as a rule soldiers ain't much good till they are past twenty. You would have a right to get off if you could prove your age; but of course you could not do that without witnesses or papers, and it's an old game for recruits who look young to try to pass as under age."

"I shan't try," Jack answered; "I have made up my mind to it now, and there's an end to it. But why ain't soldiers any good till they are past twenty, sergeant? As far as I can see, boys are just as brave as men."

"Just as brave, my lad, and when it comes to fighting the younger soldier is very often every bit as good as the old one; but they can't stand fatigue and hardship like old soldiers. A boy will start out on as long a walk as a man can take, but he can't keep it up day after day. When it comes to long marches, to sleeping on the ground in the wet, bad food, and fever from the marshes, the young soldier breaks down, the hospital gets full of boys, and they just die off like flies, while the older men pull through."

"You are a Job's comforter, I must say," Jack said with a laugh; "but I must hope that I shan't have long marches, and bad food, and damp weather, and marsh fever till I get a bit older."

"I don't want to discourage you," the sergeant remarked, "and you know there are young soldiers and young soldiers. There are the weedy, narrow-

chedsted chaps as seems to be made special for filling a grave; and there is the sturdy, hardy young chap, whose good health and good spirits carries him through. That's your sort, I reckon. Good spirits is the best medicine in the world, it's worth all the doctors and apothecaries in the army. But how did you come to be pressed? it's generally the ne'er-do-well and idle who get picked out as food for powder. That doesn't look your sort, or I'm mistaken."

"I hope not," Jack said. "I am here because I am a sort of cousin of the mayor of Southampton. He wanted me to serve in his shop. I stood it for a time, but I hated it, and at last I had a row with his foreman and knocked him down, so I was kicked out into the streets; and I suppose he didn't like seeing me about, and so took this means of getting rid of me. He needn't have been in such a hurry, for if he had waited a few days I should have gone, for I had shipped as a boy on board of a ship about to sail for the colonies."

"In that case, my lad, you have no reason for ill will against this precious relation of yours, for he has done you a good turn while meaning to do you a bad un. The life of a boy on board a ship isn't one to be envied, I can tell you; he is at everyone's beck and call, and gets more kicks than halfpence. Besides, what comes of it? You get to be a sailor, and, as far as I can see, the life of a sailor is the life of a dog. Look at the place where he sleeps—why, it ain't as good as a decent kennel. Look at his food—salt meat as hard as

a stone, and rotten biscuit that a decent dog would turn up his nose at; his time is never his own—wet or dry, storm or calm, he's got to work when he's told. And what's he got to look forward to? A spree on shore when his voyage is done, and then to work again. Why, my lad, a soldier's life is a gentleman's life in comparison. Once you have learned your drill and know your duty you have an easy time of it. Most of your time's your own. When you are on a campaign you eat, drink, and are jolly at other folks' expense; and if you do get wet when you are on duty, you can generally manage to turn in dry when you are relieved. It's not a bad life, my boy, I can tell you; and if you do your duty well, and you are steady, and civil, and smart, you are sure to get your stripes, especially if you can read and write, as I suppose you can."

Jack nodded with a half smile.

"In that case," the sergeant said, "you may even in time get to be an officer. I can't read nor write—not one in twenty can—but those as can, of course, has a better chance of promotion if they distinguish themselves. I should have got it last year in the Low Country, and Marlborough himself said: 'Well done!' when I, with ten rank and file, held a bridge across a canal for half an hour against a company of French. He sent for me after it was over, but when he found I couldn't read or write he couldn't promote me; but he gave me a purse of twenty guineas, and I don't know but what that suited me better, for I am a deal

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more comfortable as a sergeant than I should have been as an officer; but you see, if you had been in my place up you would have gone."

The wind fell in the afternoon, and the cutter dropped her anchor as the tide was running against her. At night Jack Stilwell and the others who had accepted their fate slept with the troops on board instead of returning to rejoin their companions in the hold. Jack was extremely glad of the change, as there was air and ventilation, whereas in the hold the atmosphere had been close and oppressive. He was the more glad next morning when he found that the wind, which had sprung up soon after midnight, was freshening fast, and was, as one of the sailors said, likely to blow hard before long. The cutter was already beginning to feel the effect of the rising sea, and towards the afternoon was pitching in a lively way and taking the sea over her bows.

"You seem to enjoy it, young un," the sergeant said as Jack, holding on by a shroud, was facing the wind regardless of the showers of spray which flew over him. "Half our company are down with seasickness, and as for those chaps down in the forehold they must be having a bad time of it, for I can hear them groaning and cursing through the bulkhead. The hatchway has been battened down for the last three hours."

"I enjoy it," Jack said; "whenever I got a holiday at Southampton I used to go out sailing. I knew most of the fishermen there, they were always ready to take me with them as an extra

hand. When do you think we shall get to Dover?"

"She is walking along fast," the sergeant said; "we shall be there to-morrow morning. We might be there before, but the sailors say that the skipper is not likely to run in before daylight, and before it gets dark he will shorten sail so as not to get there before."

The wind increased until it was blowing a gale; but the cutter was a good sea boat, and being in light trim made good weather of it. However, even Jack was pleased when he felt a sudden change in the motion of the vessel, and knew that she was running into Dover harbour.

Morning was just breaking, and the hatchways being removed the sergeant shouted down to the pressed men that they could come on deck. It was a miserable body of men who crawled up in answer to the summons, utterly worn out and exhausted with the sea sickness, the closeness of the air, and the tossing and buffeting of the last eighteen hours; many had scarce strength to climb the ladder.

All the spirit and indignation had been knocked out of them—they were too miserable and dejected to utter a complaint. The sergeant ordered his men to draw up some buckets of water, and told the recruits to wash themselves and make themselves as decent as they could, and the order was sharply enforced by the captain when he came on deck.

"I would not march through the streets of

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Dover with such a filthy, hang-dog crew," he said; "why, the very boys would throw mud at you. Come, do what you can to make yourselves clean, or I will have buckets of water thrown over you. I would rather take you on shore drenched to the skin than in that state. You have brought it entirely on yourselves by your obstinacy. Had you enlisted at once without further trouble you would not have suffered as you have."

The fresh air and cold water soon revived even the most exhausted of the new recruits, and as soon as all had been made as presentable as circumstances would admit of, the order was given to land. The party were formed on the quay, four abreast, the soldiers forming the outside line, and so they marched through Dover, where but yet a few people were up and stirring, to the camp formed just outside the walls of the castle. The colonel of the regiment met them as they marched in.

"Well, Captain Lowther, you have had a rough time of it, I reckon. I thought the whole camp was going to be blown away last night. These are the recruits from Southampton, I suppose?"

"Yes, colonel, what there is left of them; they certainly had a baddish twelve hours of it."

"Form them in line," the colonel said, "and let me have a look at them. They are all ready and willing to serve her majesty, I hope," he added with a grim smile.

"They are all ready, no doubt," Captain Lowther replied; "as to their willingness I can't say so much. Some half-dozen or so agreed at once

to join without giving any trouble, foremost among them that lad at the end of the line, who, Sergeant Edwards tells me, is a fine young fellow and likely to do credit to the regiment; the rest chose to be sulky, and have suffered for it by being kept below during the voyage. However, I think all their nonsense is knocked out of them now."

The colonel walked along the line and examined the men.

"A sturdy set of fellows," he said to the captain, "when they have got over their buffeting. Now, my lads," he went on, addressing the men, "you have all been pressed to serve her majesty in accordance with act of parliament, and though some of you may not like it just at present, you will soon get over that and take to it kindly enough. I warn you that the discipline will be strict. In a newly-raised regiment like this it is necessary to keep a tight hand, but if you behave yourselves and do your duty you will not find the life a hard one. Remember, it's no use any of you thinking of deserting; we have got your names and addresses, so you couldn't go home if you did; and you would soon be brought back wherever you went, and you know pretty well what's the punishment for desertion without my telling you. That will do."

No one raised a voice in reply—each man felt that his position was hopeless, for, as the colonel said, they had been legally impressed. They were first taken before the adjutant, who rapidly swore them in, and they were then set to work, assisted by some more soldiers, in pitching tents. Clothes

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were soon served out to them, and the work of drill commenced at once.

Each day brought fresh additions to the force, and in a fortnight its strength was complete. Jack did not object to the hard drill which they had to go through, and which occupied them from morning till night, for the colonel knew that on any day the regiment might receive orders to embark, and he wanted to get it in something like shape before setting sail. Jack did, however, shrink from the company in which he found himself. With a few exceptions the regiment was made up of wild and worthless fellows, of whom the various magistrates had been only too glad to clear their towns, and mingled with these were the sweepings of the jails, rogues and ruffians of every description. The regiment might eventually be welded into a body of good soldiers, but at present discipline had not done its work, and it was simply a collection of reckless men, thieves, and vagabonds.

CHAPTER III

A Domestic Storm

GREAT was the surprise of Dame Anthony when, on sending down her servant with a letter to Jack Stilwell, the woman returned, saying that he had left his lodging two days before and had not returned. All his things had been left behind, and it was evident that when he went out he had no intention of leaving. The woman of the house said that Master Stilwell was a steady and regular lodger, and that she could not but think something had happened to him. Of course she didn't know, but all the town were talking of the men who had been taken away by the pressgang, and she thought they must have clapped hands on her lodger.

Dame Anthony at once jumped at that conclusion. The pressing of fifty men had indeed made a great stir in the town during the last two days. The mayor's office had been thronged by angry women complaining of their husbands or sons being dragged away; and the mayor had been the object of many threats and much indignation, and had the evening before returned home bespattered with mud, having been pelted on his

way from the town hall by the women, and having only been saved from more serious assaults by the exertions of the constables.

Dame Anthony had been surprised that her husband had taken these things so quietly. Some of the women had indeed been seized and set in the stocks, but the mayor had made light of the affair, and had altogether seemed in an unusually good state of temper. Dame Anthony at once connected this with Jack's disappearance. She knew that the list had been made out by the mayor, and the idea that her husband had taken this means of getting rid of Jack, and that he was exulting over the success of his scheme, flashed across her. As the mayor was away at the town hall she was forced to wait till his return to dinner; but no sooner had the meal been concluded and Andrew Carson and the two assistants had left the table than she began:

"Richard, I want to look at the list of the men who were pressed."

The request scarcely came as a surprise upon the clothier. He had made up his mind that his wife would be sure sooner or later to discover that Jack was missing, and would connect his disappearance with the operations of the pressgang.

"What do you want to see that for?" he asked shortly.

"I want to see who have been taken," his wife said. "There is no secret about it, I suppose?"

"No, there is no secret," the mayor replied. "According to the act of parliament and the re-

quest of her majesty's minister I drew out a list of fifty of the most useless and disreputable of the inhabitants of this town, and I rejoice to say that the place is rid of them all. The respectable citizens are all grateful to me for the manner in which I have fulfilled the task laid upon me, and as to the clamour of a few angry women it causes me not a moment's annoyance."

"I don't know why you are telling me all this, Richard," his wife said calmly. "I did not cast any reflections as to the manner in which you made your choice. I only said I wished to see the list."

"I do not see that the list concerns you," the mayor said. "Why do you wish to see it?"

"I wish to see it, Richard, because I suspect that the name of my cousin Jack Stilwell is upon it."

"Oh, mother!" cried Alice, who had been listening in surprise to the conversation, suddenly starting to her feet; "you don't mean that they have pressed Jack to be a soldier."

"Leave the room, Alice," her father said angrily; "this is no concern of a child like you." When the door closed behind the girl he said to his wife:

"Naturally his name is in the list. I selected fifty of the most worthless fellows in Southampton, and his name was the first which occurred to me. What then?"

"Then I tell you, Richard," Dame Anthony said, rising, "that you are a wretch, a mean, cowardly, cruel wretch. You have vented your spite upon Jack, whom I love as if he were my

own son, because he would not put up with the tyranny of your foreman and yourself. You may be mayor of Southampton, you may be a great man in your own way, but I call you a mean, pitiful fellow. I won't stay in the house with you an hour longer. The wagon for Basingstoke comes past at three o'clock, and I shall go and stay with my father and mother there, and take Alice with me."

"I forbid you to do anything of the sort," the mayor said pompously.

"You forbid!" Dame Anthony cried. "What do I care for your forbidding? If you say a word I will go down the town and join those who pelted you with mud last night. A nice spectacle it would be for the worthy mayor of Southampton to be pelted in the street by a lot of women led by his own wife. You know me, Richard. You know when I say I will do a thing I will do it."

"I will lock you up in your own room, woman."

"You won't," Dame Anthony said scornfully. "I would scream out of the window till I brought the whole town round. No, Mr. Mayor. You have had your own way, and I am going to have mine. Go and tell the town if you like that your wife has left you because you kidnapped her cousin, the boy she loved. You tell your story and I will tell mine. Why, the women in the town would hoot you, and you wouldn't dare show your face in the streets. You insist, indeed! Why, you miserable little man, my fingers are tingling now. Say another word to me and I will box your

ears till you won't know whether you are standing on your head or your heels."

The mayor was a small man, while Dame Anthony, although not above the usual height, was plump and strong; and her crestfallen spouse felt that she was capable of carrying her threat into execution. He therefore thought it prudent to make no reply, and his angry wife swept from the room.

It was some time before the mayor descended to his shop. In the interval he had thought the matter over, and had concluded that it would be best for him to let his wife have her way. Indeed he did not see how he could do otherwise.

He had expected a storm, but not such a storm as this. Never before in his fifteen years of married life had he seen his wife in such a passion, and there was no saying whether she would not carry all her threats into execution if he interfered with her now. No. It would be better to let her go. The storm would blow over in time. It was natural enough for her to go over and stay a few weeks with her people, and in time, of course, she would come back again. After all, he had got rid of Jack, and this being so, he could afford for a while to put up with the absence of his wife. It was unpleasant, of course, very unpleasant, to be called such names, but as no one had heard them but himself it did not so much matter. Perhaps, after all, it was the best thing that could happen that she should take it into her head to go away for a time. In her present mood she would not make things

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comfortable at home, and, of course, his daughter would side with her mother.

Accordingly, when the carrier's wagon stopped at the door the mayor went out with a pleasant countenance and saw that the boxes were safely placed in it, and that his wife was comfortably seated on some shawls spread over a heap of straw. His attention, however, received neither thanks nor recognition from Dame Anthony, while Alice, whose face was swollen with crying, did not speak a word. However, they were seated well under the cover of the wagon, and could not be seen by the few people standing near; and as the mayor continued till the wagon started speaking cheerfully, and giving them all sorts of injunctions as to taking care of themselves on the way, he flattered himself that no one would have an idea that the departure was anything but an amicable one.

A week later a letter arrived for Dame Anthony, and the mayor at once recognized the handwriting of Jack Stilwell. He took it up to his room, and had a considerable debate with himself as to whether he would open it or not. The question was, What did the boy say? If he wrote full of bitter complaints as to his treatment, the receipt of the letter by his wife would only make matters worse, and in that case it would be better to destroy the letter as well as any others which might follow it, and so put an end to all communication, for it was unlikely that the boy would ever return to England.

Accordingly he opened the letter, and, after reading it through, laid it down with a feeling of some-

thing like relief. It was written in a cheerful spirit. Jack began by saying that he feared Dame Anthony and Alice would have been anxious when they heard that he was missing from his lodgings.

“I have no doubt, my dear cousin, you will have guessed what has befallen me, seeing that so many have been taken away in the same way. I don’t think that my late master acted handsomely in thus getting rid of me; for, as the list was made up by him, it was of course his doing. But will you please tell him from me that I feel no grudge against him. In the first place, he did not know I was going away to sea, and it must naturally have angered him to see one known to be connected with him hanging about Southampton doing nothing. Besides, I know that he always meant kindly by me. He took me in when I had nowhere to go, he gave me my apprenticeship without fee, and, had it not been that my roving spirit rendered me disinclined for so quiet a life, he would doubtless have done much for me hereafter. Thus thinking it over, it seems to me but reasonable that he should have been angered at my rejection of the benefits he intended for me.

“In the next place, it may be that his action in shipping me off as a soldier may in the end prove to be for my welfare. Had I carried out my intention and gone as a sailor, a sailor I might have remained all my life. It seems to me that as a soldier my chances are larger. Not only shall I see plenty of fighting and adventure, which accords well with my spirit, but it seems to me—and a

sergeant who has shown me much kindness says that it is so—that there are fair chances of advancement. The soldiers are for the great part disorderly and ignorant men; and, as I mean to be steady and obedient so as to gain the goodwill of the officers, and as I have received a good education from my dear father, I hope in time to come to be regarded as one somewhat different from the common herd; and if I get an opportunity of distinguishing myself, and do not get killed by a Spanish bullet or pike thrust, or by the fevers which they say are not uncommon, then it is possible I may come back at the end of the war with some honour and credit, and, the sergeant said, may even obtain advancement to the rank of an officer. Therefore my late master, having done me many good turns, may perhaps find that this last one—even though he intended it not—is the best of all. Will you make my respects to him, dear cousin, and tell him that I feel no grudge or ill will against him? Will you give my love to my cousin Alice? Tell her that I will bring her home some rare keepsakes from Spain should they fall in my way; and you know I will do the same for yourself, who have always been so good and kind to me.”

“The boy is not a bad boy,” the mayor said, well pleased as he laid down the letter. “It may be that I have judged him too harshly, seeing that he set himself against what was best for his welfare. Still, one cannot expect men’s heads on boys’ shoulders, and he writes dutifully and properly. I believe it is the fault of Andrew Carson,

who was for ever edging me on by reports of the boy's laziness and carelessness. He certainly has a grudge against him, and he assuredly exceeded his place and authority when he lifted his hand against my wife's cousin. It seems to me truly that I have acted somewhat hastily and wrong-headedly in the matter. I shall give Master Carson notice that at the end of a month I shall require his services no longer—the fellow puts himself too forward. That will please Mary; she never liked him, and women in these matters of likes and dislikes are shrewder than we are. Perhaps when she hears that he is going, and reads this letter, which I will forward to her by the carrier, she may come back to me. I certainly miss her sorely, and the household matters go all wrong now that she is away. She ought not to have said things to me; but no wise man thinks anything of what a woman says when she's angry; and now that I think things over, it certainly seems to me that she had some sort of warrant for her words. Yes, I certainly don't know what can have come over me, unless it was that fellow Andrew Carson. Richard Anthony has not been considered a bad fellow, else he would never have become the mayor of Southampton; and for fifteen years Mary and I have got on very well together, save for the little disputes which have arisen from her over-masterful disposition. But she is a good wife—none could wish for better—though she is given to flame out at what she considers unrighteous dealings; but every woman has her faults, and every man too as far as that

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goes, and upon the whole few of them have less than Mary. I will write to her at once."

The mayor was not a man to delay when his mind was once made up, and sitting down at a writing desk he wrote as follows:—

"Dear Wife,—I enclose a letter which has come for you from your cousin Jack. I opened it, and you will think poorly of me when I tell you that had it been filled with complaints of me, as I expected, it would not have come to your hands; for your anger against me is fierce enough without the adding of fresh fuel thereto. But the lad, as you will see, writes in quite another strain, and remembers former kindnesses rather than late injuries. His letter has put it into my head to think matters over, and in a different spirit from that in which I had previously regarded it, and I have come to the conclusion that I have acted wrongly; first, that I did not make allowances enough for the boy; second, that I insisted on keeping him to a trade he disliked; third, that I have given too willing an ear to what Andrew Carson has said against the boy; lastly, that I took such means of freeing myself from him. I to-day give Andrew Carson notice to quit my service—a matter in which I have hitherto withstood you. I am willing to forget the words which you spoke to me in anger, seeing that there was some foundation for them, and that when a woman is in a passion her tongue goes further than she means. Now, as I am ready to put this on one side, I trust that you also will put aside your

anger at my having obtained the pressing for a soldier of your cousin. You can see for yourself by his writing that he does not desire that any enmity shall arise out of the manner of his going. For fifteen years we have lived in amity, and I see not why, after this cloud passes away, we should not do so again.

“I miss you sorely. Things go badly with us since you have gone. The food is badly cooked, and the serving indifferent. If you will write to tell me that you are willing to come back, and to be a loving and dutiful wife again, I will make me a holiday and come over to Basingstoke to fetch you and Alice home again. I am writing to Jack and sending him five guineas, for which he will no doubt find a use in getting things suitable for the adventure upon which he is embarked, for the payment of her majesty to her soldiers does not permit of the purchase of many luxuries. On second thoughts I have resolved to pay Andrew Carson his month's wages, and to let him go at once. So that if you return you will not find one here against whom you have always been set, and who is indeed in no small way the author of the matters which have come between us, save only as touching the impressment, of which I own that I must take the blame solely upon myself. Give my love to Alice, and say that she must keep up her spirits, and look forward to the time when her cousin Jack shall come back to her after the killing of many Spaniards.”

Having signed and carefully sealed this letter,

with that from Jack enclosed within it, the mayor then proceeded to write to the young soldier:—

“My dear Cousin Jack,—I have read the letter which you sent to my wife, and it is written in a very proper and dutiful strain. Your departure has caused trouble between my wife and me; but this I hope will pass away after she has read and considered your letter. She carried matters so far that she is at present with your cousin Alice at the house of her parents at Basingstoke. Having read your letter, I write to tell you that I feel that I am not without blame towards you. I did not see it myself until the manner of your letter opened my eyes to the fact. I have misunderstood you, and, being bent on carrying out my own inclinations, made not enough allowance for yours. Were you here now I doubt not that in future we should get on better together; but as that cannot be, I can only say that I recognize the kind spirit in which you wrote, and that I trust that in future we shall be good friends. I enclose you an order for five guineas on a tradesman in Dover with whom I have dealings. There are many little things that you may want to buy for your voyage to supplement the pay which you receive. Andrew Carson is leaving my service. I think that it is he greatly who came between us, and has brought things to the pass which I cannot but regret.”

A week later the cloth merchant's shop in the High Street was shut up, and the mayor, having appointed a deputy for the week he purposed to be absent, took his place in the stage for Basingstoke,

when a complete reconciliation was effected between him and his wife.

The starting of the expedition was delayed beyond the intended time, for the government either could not or would not furnish the required funds, and the Earl of Peterborough was obliged to borrow considerable sums of money, and to involve himself in serious pecuniary embarrassments to remedy the defects, and to supply as far as possible the munition and stores necessary for the efficiency of the little force he had been appointed to command. It consisted of some 3000 English troops, who were nearly all raw and undisciplined, and a brigade 2000 strong of Dutch soldiers.

Early in May the regiment to which Jack Stilwell belonged marched for Portsmouth, where the rest of the expedition were assembled, and embarked on board the transports lying at Spithead, and on the 22nd of the month set sail for St. Helens, where they were joined on the following day by their general, who embarked with his suite on board the admiral's ship. On the 24th the fleet sailed for Lisbon.

Fond as Jack was of the sea, he did not find the change an agreeable one. On shore the constant drill and steady work had fully occupied the men, and had left them but little time for grumbling. On board ship things were different. In those days there was but little of the strict discipline which is now maintained on board a troopship. It was true that the vessels in which the expedition was being carried belonged to the royal navy; but

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even here the discipline was but lax. There were many good sailors on board; but the bulk of the crew had been pressed into the service as harshly and tyrannically as were the soldiers themselves, and the grumblers of one class found ready sympathizers among the others.

The captain was a young man of good family who had obtained his appointment solely by interest, and who, although he would have fought his ship bravely in an action with the enemy, took but little interest in the regular work, leaving such matters entirely in the hands of his first lieutenant. The military officers were all new to their work. On shore they had had the support which the presence of a considerable number of veteran troops in garrison in the castle gave them; but they now ceased to struggle against the difficulty of keeping up discipline among a large number of raw and insubordinate recruits, relying upon bringing them into order and discipline when they got them ashore in a foreign country. Beyond, therefore, a daily parade, and half an hour's drill in the handling of their firelocks, they interfered but little with the men.

Sergeant Edwards with twenty of his men had at the last minute, to Jack's great satisfaction, been drafted into the regiment, and accompanied them on their voyage.

"Ay, they are a rough lot," the sergeant said in answer to an observation of Jack as to the grumbling of the men after they had been at sea a few days; "but what can you expect when you take

men from their homes against their will, pick out the worst characters in each town, make up their number with gaolbirds, and then pack them off to sea before they have got into shape? There's nothing tries men more than a sea voyage. Here they are packed up as close as herrings, with scarcely room to move about, with nothing to do, and with food which a dog would turn up his nose to eat. Naturally they get talking together, and grumbling over their wrongs till they work themselves up.

"I wish the voyage was over. It wouldn't matter if we had a good steady old crew, but more than half of them have been pressed, many of them are landsmen who have been carried off just as you were. No doubt they would all fight toughly enough if a Frenchman hove in view, but the captain couldn't rely on them in a row on board. As long as the fleet keeps together it's all right enough. Here are nine vessels, and no one on board one knows what's going on in the others, but if the captain of any one of them were to hoist a signal that a mutiny had broken out on board, the others would be round her with their port-holes opened ready to give her a dose of round shot in no time."

"But you don't think that it is really likely that we shall have any trouble, sergeant?"

"There won't be no trouble if, as I am telling you, the weather holds fine and the fleet keep together; but if there's a gale and the ships get scattered, no one can't say what might come of it."

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"I can't think how they could be so mad as to get up a mutiny," Jack said; "why, even supposing they did take the ship, what would they do with it?"

"Them's questions as has been asked before, my lad, and there's sense and reason in them, but you knows as well as I that there's many a craft sailing the seas under the black flag. There isn't a ship as puts to sea but what has half a dozen hands on board who have been in slavers, and who are full of tales of islands where everything grows without the trouble of putting a spade in the ground, where all sorts of strange fruit can be had for the picking, and where the natives are glad enough to be servants or wives, as the case may be, to whites. It's just such tales as these as leads men away, and I will warrant there's a score at least among the crew of the *Cæsar* who are telling such tales to any who will listen to them. Well, you see, it's a tempting story enough to one as knows no better. On the one side there is a hard life, with bad food and the chance of being shot at, and the sartainty of being ordered about and not being able to call your life your own. On the other side is a life of idleness and pleasure, of being your own master, and, if you want something which the islands can't afford you, why, there's just a short cruise and then back you come with your ship filled up with plunder. I don't say as it's not tempting; but there's one thing agin it, and the chaps as tells these yarns don't say much about that."

"What is it, sergeant?"

"It's just the certainty of a halter or a bloody

grave sooner or later. The thing goes on for some time, and then, when merchantship after merchantship is missing, there are complaints at home, and out comes a ship or two with the queen's pennant at the head, and then either the pirate ship gets caught at sea and sunk or captured, or there's a visit to the little island, and a short shrift for those found there.

"No, I don't think it can pay, my lad, even at its best. It's jolly enough for a while, maybe, for those whose hearts are so hard that they think nothing of scuttling a ship with all on board, or of making the crew and passengers walk the plank in cold blood. Still even they must know that it can't last, and that there's a gallows somewhere waiting for them. Still, you see, they don't think of all that when a chap is a-telling them of these islands, and how pleasant the life is there, and how easy it would be to do for the officers, and take the command of the ship and sail away. Two or three chaps as makes up their mind for it will poison a whole crew in no time."

"You speak as if you knew all about it."

"I know a good deal about it," the sergeant replied gravely. "It's a tale as there ain't many as knows; but you are a sort of lad as one can trust, and so I don't mind if I tell it you. Though you wouldn't think it, I have sailed under the black flag myself."

"You, sergeant!" Jack exclaimed incredulously; "do you mean to say you have been a pirate?"

"Just that, my boy. I don't look like it, do I?"

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There ain't nothing bucaneeering about my cut. I looks just what I am, a tough old sergeant in a queen's regiment; but for all that I have been a pirate. The yarn is a long one, and I can't tell it you now, because just at present, you see, I have got to go below to look after the dinners of the company, but the first time as we can get an opportunity for a quiet talk I will tell it you. But don't you go away and think till then as I was a pirate from choice. I shouldn't like you to think that of me; there ain't never no saying at sea what may happen. I might tumble overboard to-night and get drowned, or one of the convoy might run foul of us and sink us, and to-morrow you might be alive and I might be dead, and I shouldn't like you to go on thinking all your life as that Sergeant Edwards had been a bloody pirate of his own free will. So you just bear in mind, till I tells you the whole story, as how it was forced upon me. Mind, I don't say as how I hadn't the choice of death or that, and maybe had you been in my place you would have chosen death; but, you see, I had never been brought up as you were. I had had no chances to speak of, and, being only just about your age, I didn't like the thought of dying, so you see I took to it, making up my mind secret at the same time that the first chance I had I would slip away from them. I won't tell you more now, I hain't time; but just you bear that in mind, in case of anything happening, that if Sergeant Edwards once sailed under the black flag, he didn't do it willing."

The sergeant now hurried below, leaving Jack wondering over what he had heard. Some days elapsed before the story was told, for a few hours later the sky clouded over and the wind rose, and before next morning the vessel was labouring heavily under double-reefed topsails. The soldiers were all kept below, and there was no possibility of anything like a quiet talk. The weather had hitherto been so fine and the wind so light that the vessels had glided over the sea almost without motion, and very few indeed of those on board had experienced anything of the usual seasickness; but now, in the stifling atmosphere between decks, with the vessel rolling and plunging heavily, the greater part were soon prostrate with seasickness, and even Jack, accustomed to the sea as he was, succumbed to the unpleasantness of the surroundings.

On the second day of the storm Sergeant Edwards, who had been on deck to make a report to the captain of the company, was eagerly questioned on his return below on the condition of the weather.

“It’s blowing about as hard as it can be,” he said, “and she is rolling fit to take the masts out her; but I expect you know that for yourselves. There don’t seem no chance of the gale breaking, and none of the other ships of the fleet are in sight. That’s about all I have to tell you, except that I told the captain that if he didn’t get the hatches lifted a little we should be all stifled down here. He says if there’s a bit of a lull he will ask

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them to give us a little fresh air, and in the meantime he says that any who are good sailors may go up on deck, but it will be at their own risk, for some of the seas go pretty nearly clean over her."

CHAPTER IV

The Sergeant's Yarn

JACK STILWELL and a few of the other men availed themselves of the permission to escape for a time from the stifling atmosphere below, and made their way on deck. For a time the rush of the wind and the wild confusion of the sea almost bewildered them. Masses of water were rushing along the deck, and each time she rolled the waves seemed as if they would topple over the bulwarks. Several of the party turned and went below again at once, but Jack, with a few others, waited their opportunity and, making a rush across the deck, grasped the shrouds and there hung on. Jack soon recovered from his first confusion and was able to enjoy the grandeur of the scene.

Small as was the canvas she was showing the vessel was travelling fast through the waves, sometimes completely burying her head under a sea; then as she rose again the water rushed aft knee-deep, and Jack had as much as he could do to prevent himself being carried off his feet. Fortunately all loose articles had long since been swept overboard, otherwise the risk of a broken limb from their contact would have been serious.

In a quarter of an hour even Jack had had enough of it and went below, and, having changed his drenched clothes, slung his hammock and turned in. The next day the gale began to abate, and by evening the wind had nearly died away, although the vessel was rolling as heavily as before among the great masses of water which rolled in from the Atlantic.

The hatchways, however, were now removed, and all below ordered on deck, and after a while a party was told off to sluice down their quarters below. The men were all weakened by their confinement, but their spirits soon rose, and there were long plenty of laughter at the misfortunes which befell those who tried to cross the deck, for the ship was rolling so heavily that it was impossible for a landsman to keep his feet without holding on.

The next morning, although a heavy swell was still rolling, the ship assumed her normal aspect. The sailors had removed all trace of disorder above, clothes were hung out to dry, and, as the ship was still far too unsteady to allow of walking exercise, the soldiers sat in groups on the deck, laughing and chatting and enjoying the warm sun whose rays streamed down upon them. Seeing Sergeant Edwards standing alone looking over the bulwark, Jack made his way up to him.

"It has been a sharp blow," the sergeant said, "and I am glad it's over; the last four days have been enough to sicken one of the sea for life. I suppose you think this is a good opportunity for my yarn."

"That is just what I was thinking, sergeant."

"Very well, then, my lad, here goes. I was born at Poole. My people were all in the sea-faring line, and it was only natural that, as soon as I got old enough to stand kicking, I was put on board a coaster plying between Poole and London. It was pretty rough, but the skipper wasn't a bad kind of fellow when he was sober. I stuck to that for three years, and then the old craft was wrecked on Shoreham beach. Fortunately she was driven up so far that we were able to drop over the bowsprit pretty well beyond the reach of the waves, but there was no getting the *Eliza* off. It was no great loss, for she would have had to be broken up as firewood in another year or two. About six hours out of every twenty-four I was taking my turn at spells at the pump.

"Now the *Eliza* was cast away, I had to look out for another ship. I had had enough of coasters, so instead of going home I tramped it up to London. Having got a berth on board a foreign-bound vessel, I made two voyages out to Brazil and back. A fine country is the Brazils, but the Portuguese ain't the fellows to make much out of it. Little under-sized chaps, they are all chatter and jabber, and when they used to come alongside to unload, it were jest for all the world like so many boatfuls of monkeys.

"Well, I starts for my third voyage, being by this time about sixteen or seventeen. We got out to Rio right enough; but we couldn't get a full cargo back, and the captain determined to cruise

among the West Indy Islands and fill up his ship. We were pretty nigh full when one morning the lookout hailed that there were two vessels just coming out of an inlet in an island we were passing, some three miles on the weather bow.

“The captain was soon on deck with his glass, and no sooner did he make them out than he gave orders to clap every sail on her. We hadn’t a very smart crew, but there are not many British ships ever made sail faster than we did then. The men just flew about, for it needed no glass to show that the two vessels which came creeping out from among the trees weren’t customers as one wanted to talk to on the high seas. The one was a brig, the other a schooner. They carried lofty spars ever so much higher than an honest trader could want; and quick as we had got up our sails, they had got their canvas spread as soon as we had.

“The ship was a fast sailer, but it didn’t need half an hour to show that they had the legs of us. So the skipper called the crew aft. ‘Now, my lads,’ he said, ‘you see those two vessels astern. I don’t think it needs any telling from me as to what they are. They might be Spaniards or they might be French, or they might be native traders, but we are pretty well sure they ain’t anything of the kind. They are pirates—I guess the same two vessels I heard them talking about down at Rio. They have been doing no end of damage there. There were pretty nigh a dozen ships missing, and they put them all down to them. However, a couple of English frigates had come into Rio, and

hearing what had happened had gone out to chase them. They hadn't caught them, and the Brazilians thought that they had shifted their quarters and gone for a cruise in other latitudes.

“ ‘The description they gave of them answered to these two—a brig and a schooner, with low hulls and tall spars. One of them carries ten guns, the other two on each side, and a heavy piece mounted on a swivel amidships. It was said that before they went down to Brazil they had been carrying on their games among the West Indian Islands, and had made it so hot for themselves that they had been obliged to move off from there. It was like enough that, now the hue and cry after them had abated, they would return to their old quarters.

“ ‘Well, my lads, I needn't tell you what we have to expect if they take us. Every man-jack will either get his throat cut or be forced to walk the plank. So we will fight her to the last; for if the worst comes to the worst, it's better to be killed fighting like men than to be murdered in cold blood. However, I hope it won't come to that. We carry twelve guns, and they are heavier metal than most merchantmen have on board. We are more than a match for either of them alone; and if we can manage to cripple one, we can beat the other off.

“ ‘At any rate we will try our best. Thank God we have no women on board, and only ourselves to think of! Now, my lads, cast the guns loose and get the ammunition on deck; run two of the guns aft and train them over the stern. As soon as

they come within range we will try and knock some spars out of them. Now, boys, give three cheers for the old flag, and we will swear together it shall never come down while there's one of us to fight the ship.'

"The men gave three cheers and then went off to their quarters at the guns. They were quiet and grave, and it was easy enough to see that they did not like the prospect. An Englishman always goes into action, as far as I have seen, with a light heart and a joke on his lips when he's fighting against Frenchmen or Spaniards or any other foe, but it's a different thing when it's a pirate he has to deal with. Every man knows then that it's a case of life or death, and that he's got to win or die. The enemy made no secret of what they were, for when they got within a mile of us two black flags ran up to their mastheads.

"The captain he trained one of the stern chasers hisself, and the first mate took the other. They fired at the same moment, both aiming at the schooner, which was getting the nearest to us. They were good shots both of them. The mate's ball struck the water some twenty yards in front of her forefoot, and smashed her bow planking some three feet above the water line; while the captain's struck her bulwark, tore along her deck, and went out astern, doing some damage by the way, I reckon.

"We could see there was some confusion on board. They hadn't reckoned that we carried such heavy metal, and our luck in getting both shots

on board must have surprised them. Then her bow paid off, there was a puff of smoke amidship, and a ball from the long swivel gun buzzed overhead, passing through our mainsail without touching mast or stay.

"So far we had the best of it, and the men looked more cheerful than they had done from the first moment when the pirates showed from among the trees. After that we kept up a fire from the stern guns as fast as we could load. I could not see myself what damage we were doing, for I was kept hard at work carrying ammunition. Presently the broadside guns began to fire too, and taking the chance for a look round I saw that the pirates had separated, and were coming up one on each side of us.

"So far they had not fired a shot after the first. I suppose they didn't want to lose ground by yawing, but as they came abreast of us they both opened fire. Our chaps fought their guns well, and I expect the pirates found they were not getting much the best of it; for one of them made a signal, and they both closed in to board. We hadn't had much luck after our first shot. We had hulled them over and over again and spotted their sails with shot. Many of their ropes were hanging loose, but we hadn't succeeded in crippling them, although almost every shot had been aimed at the masts; for every man knew that our only chance was to bring them down.

"As they came up close to us they poured in a volley of grape, and a minute later they grated

alongside and a crowd of men swarmed on board over the bulwarks. Our fellows fought to the last, but the odds were five to one against them. The skipper had been killed by a grape shot, but the mate he led the men; and if fighting could have saved us the ship would not have been captured. But it was no use. In two minutes every man had been cut down or disarmed. I had laid about me with a cutlass till I got a lick over my head with a boarding pike which knocked my senses out of me.

“When I opened my eyes I was hauled up to my feet and put alongside the mate and six others, all of whom was bleeding more or less. The rest had all been chucked overboard at once. In a minute or two the captain of one of the pirates, a little dapper Frenchman, came up to us. ‘You have fought your ship well,’ he said to the mate, ‘and have killed several of my officers and men; but I bear you no malice, and if you are ready to ship with me I will spare your life.’ ‘I would rather die a hundred times!’ the mate said. The pirate said nothing but just nodded, and four of his men seized the mate and flung him over the bulwarks. The same question was asked of each of the men; but each in turn refused, and an end was made of them. I was the last.

“‘Now, my boy,’ the captain said, ‘I hope you won’t be stupid like those pig-headed fellows. What do you say—good treatment and a free life on the sea, or the sharks?’

“Well, lad, if my turn hadn’t been last I would have said ‘no’ like the others. I wouldn’t have

shown the white feather before any of my ship-mates; but they had gone—there wasn't one to cast a reproachful look at me or to taunt me with cowardice. I just stood alone; there weren't no one to back me up in choosing to die rather than to serve, and so I says, 'I will join you, captain.' I don't say I was right, lad, I don't say I didn't act as a coward; but I think most young chaps with my bringing-up, and placed as I was, would have done the same. There's many as would have said 'no' if they had had comrades and friends looking on, but I don't think there's many as would have said 'no' if they had stood all alone as I did.

"I can't say as I blame myself much about that business, though I have thought it over many a score of times; but anyhow, from the first I made up my mind that at the very first chance I would get away from them. I knew the chance wasn't likely to come for some time—still there it was; and during all the black scenes I took part in on board that ship I was always telling myself that I was there against my will.

"It was the brig as I was to go in. And as soon as that little matter of the crew was settled all hands set to work to shift the cargo from the ship aboard the pirates. Wonderful quick they did it too; and when I thought how long that cargo had taken to get on board, it was wonderful how soon they whipped it out of her. When they had stript her of all they thought worth taking they ran one of the cannon to the open hatch, loaded it

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and crammed it full of balls to the muzzle; then they pointed it down the hold and fired it, and were soon on board their own craft.

“The charge must have torn a great hole in the ship’s bottom, for I could see she was settling down in the water before we had left her five minutes, and in a quarter of an hour she gave a sudden lurch and sunk. As I was in for it now I knew the best thing was to put a good face on it, so I lent a hand at shifting the cargo and did my best to seem contented. We sailed off in company, and in the morning when I came on deck I found the two craft riding side by side in a handlocked harbour.

“A few minutes later the boats were lowered and the work of getting the cargo on shore began. It was clear enough that this was the pirates’ headquarters, for there were lots of huts built on the sloping sides of the inlet, and a number of men and women stood gathered on the shore to receive us as we landed. The women were of all countries, English and French, Dutch, Spaniards, and Portuguese, with a good sprinkling of dark-skinned natives. All the white women had been taken prisoners at some time or other from vessels which had fallen into the pirates’ hands, and though most of them must have been miserable enough at heart, poor creatures, they all made a show of being glad to see the men back again. It was but a week, I learned, since the pirates had sailed, and it was considered a great stroke of luck that they should so soon have effected a capture.

"No one attended to me, but I worked hard all day with the others rowing backwards and forwards between the shore and the ship. When it became dusk they knocked off work, and the men went off to their huts, for it seemed that each of them had a wife, brown-skinned or white. Seeing that nobody paid any attention to me I went off to the little captain, who was making his way up to a hut of a better class than the others.

" 'What is to become of me, Captain?' I asked. 'Ah! I had not thought of you,' he said; 'well, you can go up with me and get some supper, and you can have a blanket and sleep on my verandah for to-night, we will see where you can be lodged in the morning.' I followed him into his house, and was astonished as I entered at the luxury of the apartment, which far exceeded anything I had ever seen before. The plank walls were concealed by hangings of light-green silk, a rich carpet covered the floor, the furniture was most handsome and massive, and had no doubt been intended for the palace of the Spanish governor of some of the islands. A pair of candelabra of solid silver stood on the table, and the white candles in them, which had just been lighted, threw a soft glow of light over the room and lighted up the table, on which was a service, also of solid silver, with vases and lovely flowers. A young woman rose from a couch as he entered: 'I have been expecting you for the last half-hour, Eugene. You have worked longer than usual this evening; if the fish are spoiled you must not blame Zoe.'

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“The speaker was a tall and very handsome woman, and I now understood how it was that my captor spoke such excellent English. There was a deep expression of melancholy on her face, but she smiled when speaking to the pirate, and her tone was one of affection.

“‘I have brought home a countryman of yours, Ellen. I forgot to allot him quarters until it was too late, so please give him over to the care of Zoe and ask her to give him some supper and a blanket; he will sleep in the verandah.’

“The first look which the woman gave me as the captain spoke made me wish that instead of speaking to the captain I had lain down fasting under a tree, there was so much contempt and horror in it; then, as I suppose she saw I was but a boy, it changed, and it seemed to me that she pitied me from her heart; however, she clapped her hands and a negress entered. She said something to her in Spanish, and the old woman beckoned me to follow her, and I was soon sitting in front of a better meal than I had tasted for many a month, perhaps the best meal I had tasted in my life.

“As she couldn't speak English there was no talking with the old woman. She gave me a tumbler of stiff rum and water to drink with my supper, and after I had done she handed me a blanket, took me out into the verandah, pointed to the side where I should get the sea breeze, and left me. I smoked a pipe or two and then went to sleep. I was awaked in the morning by someone

coming along the verandah, and, sitting up, saw the lady I had seen the night before. 'So you are English?' she said. 'Yes, ma'am,' says I touching my hat sailor fashion. 'Are you lately from home?' she asked. 'Not very late, ma'am,' says I; 'we went to Rio, first, and not filling up there were cruising about picking up a cargo when——' and I stopped, not knowing, you see, how I should put it. 'Are there any more of you?' she asked after a while in a low sort of voice. 'No, ma'am,' says I; 'I am the only one.' 'I did not ask,' she said almost in a whisper, and I could see her face was most as white as a sheet, 'I never ask. And so you have joined them?' 'Yes,' says I, 'I couldn't help it, ma'am. I was the last, you see; if there had been anyone else to have encouraged me I should have said no, but being alone——' 'Don't excuse yourself, poor boy,' she said; 'don't think I blame you. Who am I that I should blame anyone? It is little I can do for you, but if you should want anything I will do my best to befriend you.' I heard the captain's voice calling. Suddenly she put her finger to her lips, as a hint to me to hold my tongue, and off she went.

"I don't know whether the captain's wife spoke to him about me or not, but at any rate he didn't tell me off to any of the huts, but kept me at the house. I used to go down in the day to work with the other men unloading the ship and stowing away the stores, but they only worked for a few hours, morning and evening, lying in hammocks slung under the trees during the heat of the day. I made myself

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useful about the house, helped the old woman to chop wood, drew water for her, attended to the plants in the little garden round the house, trained the creepers up the verandah, and lent a hand at all sorts of odd jobs, just as a sailor will do.

“When, ten days after we arrived, the ships got ready for another cruise, I was afraid they would take me with them, and I lay awake at nights sweating as I thought over the fearful deeds I should have to take part in; but the captain gave me no orders, and to my delight the men embarked and the ships sailed away without me. I found there were some forty men left behind, whose duty it was to keep a sharp lookout and man the batteries they had got at the entrance to the cove in case any of our cruisers came in sight.

“The man who was in command was a Spaniard, a sulky, cruel-looking scoundrel. However, he didn’t have much to do with me; I took my turn at the lookout with the rest of them, and besides that there was nothing to do. The men on shore had all been in one or other of the ships when I was taken; for I found there were about a hundred and sixty of them, and a quarter stayed at home by turns, changing after each cruise, whether it was a long or short one.

“The captain’s wife often spoke to me now; she would come out and sit in the verandah while I was at work. She asked me what part I came from, and where I had sailed, and what friends I had at home. But she never said a word to me about the capture of the ship. She always looked sad now,

while she had been cheerful and bright while the captain was on shore. In time she got quite friendly with me, and one day she said: 'Peter, you will have to go to sea next time, what will you do?'

" 'I must do as the others do, God forgive me,' says I; 'but don't think, ma'am, as ever I shall do it willing. It may be years before I gets a chance, but if ever I does I shall make a run for it, whatever the risk may be. I speaks free to you, ma'am, for I feel sure as you won't say a word to no man, for it would cost me my life if they thought that I wasn't with them willing.'

" 'I will not tell anyone, Peter, you may be sure,' she said; 'but I do not think you will ever have a chance of getting away—no one ever does who once comes here.'

" Well, in time, lad, she lets out bit by bit a little about herself. She had been on her way out to join her father, who was an officer of the East Indy Company, when the ship was taken by the pirates. The men was all killed, but she and some other women was taken on board the pirate and at last brought there. The French captain took a fancy to her from the first, and after she had been here a year brought a Spanish priest they captured on board a ship and he married them. The pirates seemed to think it was a joke, and lots of them followed the captain's example and got married to the women there. What they did with the priest afterwards, whether they cut his throat or landed him in some place thousands of miles away,

or entered him on board ship, is more nor I know.

“There’s no doubt the captain’s wife was fond of her husband, pirate as he was; he had not behaved so bad to her—but except when he was with her she was always sad.

“She had an awful horror of the life he led, and with this was a terror lest he should fall into the hands of a cruiser, for she knew that if he hadn’t the good luck to be killed in the fight, he would be tried and hung at the nearest port. It was a kind of mixed feeling, you see; she would have given everything to be free from the life she was leading, and yet even had she had the chance she would not have left her husband. I believe he had promised her to give it up, but she must have knowed that he never would do it; besides, if he had slipped away from the ship at any place where they touched he could not have got her away, and her life would have paid for his desertion.

“But I don’t think he would have gone if he could, for, quiet and nice as he was when at home, he was a demon at sea. Ruffians and scoundrels as were his crew, the boldest of them were afraid of him. It was not a word and a blow, but a word and a pistol shot with him; and if it hadn’t been that he was a first-rate seaman, that he fought his ships splendidly, and that there was no one who could have kept any show of order or discipline had he not been there, I don’t believe they would have put up with him for a day.

“Well, lad, I sailed with them for three voyages.

I won't tell you what I saw and heard, but it was years before I could sleep well at night, but would start up in a cold sweat with those scenes before my eyes and those screams ringing in my ears. I can say that I never took the life of a man or woman. Of course I had to help to load the cannon, and when the time for boarding came would wave my cutlass and fire my pistols with the best of them; but I took good care never to be in the front line, and the others were too busy with their bloody doings to notice what share I took in them.

"We had been out about a fortnight on my third voyage, and the schooner and brig were lying in a little bay when we saw what we took to be a large merchant ship coming along. She was all painted black, her rigging was badly set up, her sails were dirty and some of them patched, she was steering east, and seemed as if she was homeward bound after a long voyage. Off we went in pursuit, thinking we had got a prize. She clapped on more sail, but we came up to her hand over hand. She opened fire with two eight-pounders over her stern. We didn't waste a shot in reply, but ranged up alongside, one on each beam. Then suddenly her sides seemed to open, fifteen ports on each side went up, and her deck swarmed with men.

"A yell of dismay went up from the schooner which I was on. In a moment a flash of fire ran along the frigate's broadside; there was a crash of timber, and the schooner shook as if she had struck on a rock. There was a cry, 'We are sinking!' Some made a wild rush for the boats, others in their

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despair jumped overboard, some cursed and swore like madmen and shook their fists at the frigate. It seemed no time when another broadside came.

“Down came the foremast, crushing half a dozen men as she fell. Her deck was nearly level with the water now. I climbed over the wreck of the foremast, and run out along the bowsprit. I looked round just as I leapt. The pirate captain was standing at the wheel. He had a pistol to his head, and I saw the flash, and he fell. Then I dived off and swam under water as hard as I could to get away from the sinking ship. When I came up I looked round. I just saw the flutter of a black flag above the water and she was gone. I was a good swimmer, and got rid of my shoes and jacket, and made up my mind for a long swim, for the frigate was too busy with the brig for anyone to pay attention to us, but it did not take long to finish it.

“In five minutes it was over. The brig lay dismasted, and scarce a dozen men out of the forty she carried were alive to throw down their arms on deck and cry that they surrendered. Then the frigate's boats were lowered; two rowed in our direction, while two put off to the brig. There were only nine of us picked up, for from the first broadside till we sank a heavy musketry fire had been poured down upon the deck, and as we were not more than fifty yards away from the frigate, the men had been just mowed down. We were all ironed as soon as we were brought on board. After that we were brought up one by one and questioned.

“ ‘You are young to be engaged in such a work as this,’ the captain said when my turn came.

“ ‘I was forced into it against my will, sir,’ I said.

“ ‘Yes,’ the captain said, ‘I suppose so; that’s the story each of the prisoners tells. How long have you been with them?’

“ ‘Less than six months, sir.’

“ ‘How old are you?’

“ ‘I am not seventeen yet. I was boy on board the *Jane and William*. We were taken by the pirates on our way back from Rio, and all except me killed or thrown overboard.’

“ ‘And you bought your life by agreeing to sail with them, I suppose?’ the captain said contemptuously.

“ ‘I did, sir,’ I said; ‘but I was the last they asked; all the others had gone, and there warn’t no one to back me up.’

“ ‘Well, boy, you know what your fate will be,’ the captain said; ‘there’s no mercy for pirates.’

“ The next day the captain sent for me again, and I took heart a little, for I thought if they had made up their minds to hang me they wouldn’t have questioned me.

“ ‘Look here, lad,’ the captain said; ‘you are the youngest of the prisoners, and less steeped in crime than any here, therefore I will at once make you an offer. If you will direct us to the lair of the pirates, I promise your life shall be spared.’

“ ‘I don’t know the latitude and longitude, sir,’ I said, ‘and I doubt if any beside the captain and

one or two others do, but I know pretty well whereabouts it is. We always set sail at night and came in at night, and none was allowed on deck except the helmsman and two or three old hands till morning; but when I was ashore and on duty at the lookout I noticed three trees growing together just at the edge of the cliff at the point where it was highest, two miles away from the entrance to the cove. They were a big un and two little uns, and I feel sure if I were to see them again I should know them.'

" 'Very well,' the captain said, 'I shall make for port at once, and hand over the prisoners to the Spanish authorities, then I will start on a cruise with you, and see if we can find your trees.'

"From the description I could give him of the islands we passed after we had been at sea a few hours, and the time it took us to sail from them to some known points, the captain was able to form a sort of idea as to which group of islands it belonged to, and when he had reached port and got rid of his prisoners, all of whom were garrotted—that's a sort of strangling, you know—by the Spaniards, a week afterwards, we set out again on our search for the island.

CHAPTER V

The Pirate Hold

“THE frigate was again disguised as a merchant-man, as, if she had passed within sight of the island looking like a ship of war, it would have put the pirates on their guard, and I had told the captain there were guns enough at the mouth of the cove to blow the ship’s boats out of the water. As to the frigate getting in, I knew she couldn’t, for there was only just enough water at the entrance for the pirate vessels to enter in. I was not in irons now, but spent my time on deck; and a wretched time it was, I can tell you, for not a sailor on board would speak to me.

“For three weeks we cruised about, sailing round island after island, but at last as we were approaching one of them I saw the three trees.

“‘That’s the place,’ I said to the boatswain, who was standing near me, and he carried the news to the quarterdeck, and brought back word I was to go to the captain.

“‘You are sure those are the trees?’

“‘Quite sure, sir.’

“‘They answer to your description certainly,’ the captain said. ‘Keep her away, master, I don’t want them to think we are steering for the island.’

“The ship’s course was altered, and she sailed along parallel with the coast.

“‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ I said, touching my hat, ‘but they have got some wonderful good glasses up at the lookout, and if I might make so bold I should say that they will make out that we have got a lot more men on deck than a merchant ship would carry.’

“‘You are right, lad,’ the captain said, and he at once gave orders that all hands, with the exception of half a dozen, should sit down under the bulwarks or go below. The captain and first lieutenant kept a sharp lookout through their glasses until we had passed the end of the island. I pointed out to them the exact position of the cove, but it was so shut in that even when I showed where it was it was as much as they could do to make it out.

“‘Now, lad, do you know of any other landing places on the other side of the island?’

“‘No, sir, and I don’t believe there is any,’ says I. ‘I know the captain said to me the first day I was on shore, ‘It’s no use your thinking of making a bolt, for there ain’t no other place but this where you could get to sea—not though you had twenty boats waiting to take you off.’ I expects that’s why they chose it. Anyhow, there never was any watch kept up on shore, though I have no doubt there was many a one who had been pressed into pirating just as I was, to save their lives, would have made off had they seen ever such a little chance of getting away.’

“‘Just come into the cabin with me,’ says he;

‘I want you to show me exactly where are these batteries, and the position of the village on shore.’

“The first lieutenant came too, and I drew them out a chart as well as I could, showing them the position of things, and told them that every evening a boom was floated across the entrance.

“‘What sentries are there on at night?’

“‘Four, sir; two close down to the water, one each side of the cove, and two in the batteries at the top. That’s the watch, but besides there are six men sleep in each of the other batteries, and six in each of the batteries inside.’

“‘Tell me more about the place and the life you led there,’ the captain said, ‘and then I shall understand the position of things better.’

“So I spun him a regular yarn about the place and the people. I told him about the captain’s wife, and she being an English woman, and how she was taken, which indeed was the way of most of the women there.

“‘I suppose that a good many of the men were pressed too,’ the captain said.

“‘I expects so, sir; but when we were together on guard or on board a ship I noticed we never talked of such things. It seemed to me as if everyone was trying to forget the past, and I think that made them more brutal and bloody-minded than they would have been. Everyone was afraid of everyone else guessing as he wasn’t contented, and was wanting to get away, and so each carried on as bad as he could.’

“‘I dare say you are right, lad; it must be a

terrible position for a man to be in; but you see the law can make no distinctions. If it wasn't thoroughly understood that if a man took up the life of a pirate, whether willingly or unwillingly, he would assuredly be executed if he was caught, we should have the sea swarming with pirates. Now, lad, you know how this boom was fastened; can you suggest any way that we could get over it or loosen it without giving the alarm?'

" 'There is no way, sir. One end is fastened by a big chain which is fixed to a great shackle which is let into a hole in the rock and fastened in there with lead; that's the fixed end of the boom. The other end, which is swung backwards and forwards when the ships go in port, has got a big chain too. It goes under an iron bar which is bent, and the two ends fastened in a rock. When they want to fix the boom the end of the chain is passed under this iron loop and then fastened to some blocks and ropes worked from the battery above, and the end of the chain is drawn up tight there, so that there is no loosing the chain till that battery is taken.'

" 'And you say the guns of the lower batteries at the inner point sweep the entrance?'

" 'They do, sir. There are ten of them on each side, twelve-pounder carronades, which are always charged, and crammed up to the muzzle with bullets and nails and bits of iron. The batteries on the top of the cliff at the entrance are the heaviest metal. They have got twenty guns in each of them. They are loaded with round shot to

keep a vessel from approaching, though of course they could fire grape into any boats they saw coming in.'

" 'This does not seem an easy business by any means, Mr. Earnshaw,' the captain said.

" 'It does not, sir,' the lieutenant agreed in a dubious sort of way; 'but no doubt it can be done, sir—no doubt it can be done.'

" 'Yes, but how?' the captain asked. 'You will be in command of the boats, Mr. Earnshaw, and it will never do to attack such a place as that without some sort of plan.'

" 'What is the boom like, my lad?' the lieutenant asked; 'is it lashed together?'

" 'No, it is a solid spar,' I said. 'The entrance is not more than forty feet wide, and the boom is part of the mainmast of a big ship.'

" 'It seems to me,' said the lieutenant, 'that the only way to get at it would be to go straight at the boom, the two lightest boats to go first. The men must get on the spar and pull the boats over, and then make a dash for the batteries, the heavy boats can follow them.'

" 'It would never do, Mr. Earnshaw,' the captain said. 'You forget there are twelve guns loaded to the muzzle with grape and musket balls all trained upon a point only forty feet across. Would it be possible to land just outside the boom, lad, on one or both sides, and to keep along the edge, or wade in the water to the batteries?'

" 'No, sir, the rock goes straight up from the water both sides.'

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“ ‘Well, the two sentries, how do they get down to the water’s edge?’

“ ‘They are let down by rope from above, sir, and the rope is hauled up as soon as they are down.’

“ ‘This is a deuce of a place, Mr. Earnshaw,’ the captain said. ‘We must do nothing hastily in this matter, or we shall only be throwing away the lives of a lot of men, and failing in our object. I was intending to sail on and not to return for a week, for no doubt they will be specially vigilant for a time after seeing a large ship pass them. As it is, I will return to-night to the back of the island, and will there leave the cutter and my gig. You will be in charge of the cutter, and Mr. Escombe will take the gig. I shall then sail away again before daylight; for, although from what the lad said there is no watch kept on that side of the island, it cannot be more than three miles across, and any of the men or women might stroll across or might from any high point in the island obtain a view that way. You will make a thorough survey of all that side. The cliffs certainly seem, so far as we could see them as we left the island, as perpendicular as they are on the side we passed; but there may be some place easier than another—some place where, by setting our wits to work, we may make a shift to climb up. Get into the island I will, if I have to blast a flight of steps up the cliff.’

“ ‘I will do my best to find a place, sir,’ the lieutenant said; ‘and, if there isn’t one, I will make one.’

“The lieutenant told me that I was to accompany him in the cutter, and all was got ready for the trip. Water and a week’s rations of food were placed on board the boats; for in that climate there was no saying when a gale might spring up, or how long the vessel might be before she got back to pick up the boats.

“When we were fairly out of sight of the island we lay to till it got dusk, and then her head was pointed back again. There was scarce a breath of wind stirring, and the vessel went through the water so slowly that a couple of hours later the captain ordered the boats to be lowered, for he saw that if the wind didn’t freshen the ship could not get to the island, much less get away again, before daylight. The oars were got out and off we started, and after four hours’ steady rowing, the lieutenant, who was steering by compass, made out the land looming high above us. Another quarter of an hour’s row and we dropped our grapnels close to the foot of the cliffs, and the men were told to get a sleep as well as they could till morning.

“As soon as it was daylight we were off again and rowed to the end of the island; for, as Mr. Earnshaw said to the third lieutenant, we had best begin at the end and do the work thoroughly. When we got to the point we turned and rowed back, keeping about two hundred yards from the cliff, so that we could see well up. They were about a hundred feet high—sometimes a little less, sometimes a good bit more, and they went as straight up from the water’s edge as the cliffs at Dover, only

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there weren't no beach. It was deep water right up to the foot.

"We went along very slowly, the men only just dipping their oars into the water, and all of us watching every foot of the cliffs. Sometimes we would stop altogether while the officers talked over the possibility of anyone climbing up at some place where the water trickling down from the top had eaten away the face a little; but not a goat in the world could have climbed up them, not to say men. So we kept on till we got to the other end of the island, which must have been five miles long. Not a place could we see.

" 'Unless we are going to do as the captain said — blast steps up the face of that rock — I don't believe it's to be done,' Lieutenant Earnshaw said to Mr. Escombe. 'Well, there's nothing to do, lads, but to row in and drop your grapnels again and wait till we see the ship's lights to-night.'

"Although we rowed in to within an oar's-length of the cliff, there was eight fathoms of water when we dropped the grapnels. We had been lying there an hour when the third lieutenant said:

" 'I should think, Mr. Earnshaw, that if we were to bring the pinnace with that four-pounder gun in the bow and up-end it, and with a small charge fire a ball with a rope fastened to it up into that clump of trees we saw just about the middle of the island, it might get caught.'

" 'So it might, Escombe, and the idea is a good one; but I doubt whether there's a man on board

ship could climb a rope swinging like that against the face of those cliffs.'

" 'He might if we used a knotted rope,' Mr. Escombe said.

" 'I wouldn't mind making a try, yer honour,' one of the sailors said, and half a dozen others volunteered their readiness to make the attempt.

" 'I will put it to the captain,' Mr. Earnshaw said; 'if he agrees, as you were the first to volunteer, Jones, you shall have the chance.'

"The day was dead calm, so was the night that followed it; and although we rowed back to the end of the island from which we had come, no lights were to be seen that night.

"The next day passed slowly. The sun was hot; but towards evening the lieutenant gave permission for the men to bathe; but warned us that no man must go far from the boats, because there might be sharks about. However, we didn't see none, and we enjoyed the dip, and were in better humour still when we found that a light breeze was springing up. It might have been about midnight when the men on watch made out a light to seaward, and we weren't long in getting up our grapnels and sitting to our oars. In half an hour we were on board, and were soon sailing away from the island again.

"The next night in we came again, and I saw that the third lieutenant's plan was going to be adopted; in fact, I guessed so before; for the sail-makers had been at work with two light ropes making a rope ladder, and the ship's smith had

got some empty shells on deck, and had made a shift to screw some iron eyes into them for fixing ropes to. The gun was taken out of the pinnace and a little mortar fixed in her, and half a dozen ropes, each a hundred fathoms long, had knots put in them every two feet.

“The launch and the two cutters were lowered as well as the pinnace this time, and the crews were armed with cutlass and pistol. I went with them as before, as I should be wanted to guide them when they got near the village. It was a bright starlight night without haze, so that when we got close we could make out the outline of the cliffs, and could see the thick wood growing on the top. When we got within about a hundred yards of the cliffs the boat stopped rowing.

“‘Don’t use more powder than you can help, gunner,’ Mr. Earnshaw said. ‘In the first place, we don’t want to do more than carry out the rope to its full length; in the next place, we don’t want to make more noise than we can help. What wind there is is fortunately blowing seaward, and being so close under the cliff the sound will be echoed back. At the same time the less noise the better.’

“‘I will begin with very little, sir. If the ball don’t go to the top of the cliff, I shall put a trifle more into the gun next time; it’s better to make a mistake on the right side.’

“A small quantity of powder was put in the mortar, which was only a four-inch one. Then a wad was put in, and a shell with one of the knotted ropes fastened to it dropped in the top.

The rope had been coiled in a tub so as to run out easily. The gunner applied the match. There was a dull report, and every man held his breath to listen. There was a thud high up on the cliff and then a splash.

“‘A few feet short of the top, I should say, gunner. You must put in more next time, for the shell must go well up over the trees and drop among them, otherwise it won’t catch.’

“‘The gunner by the light of the lantern measured out half as much powder again as he had used before, and then fired. This time we heard no sound till there was a faint splash in the water.

“‘The rope’s gone, sir,’ the gunner said looking into the tub. ‘There was a little too much this time.’

“‘I don’t think so,’ Mr. Escombe said. ‘I think that splash was the end of the rope touching the water. In that case it will be just right, a hundred feet up the cliffs, and five hundred feet among the trees. No fear of the rope coming back to us.’

“‘It took us a quarter of an hour’s search in the dark to find the rope; but at last we came upon it, and sure enough there was only four or five fathoms in the water.

“‘Now, Jones,’ Mr. Earnshaw said, ‘it’s your turn. Put that light line over your shoulders, and when you get to the top haul on it till you get up the rope ladder, and fasten that to a stout trunk and give a low hail. We will hold the rope as steady as we can below while you mount.’

“ ‘Ay, ay, sir,’ said the man, who was an active young chap; ‘I will be up there in a jiffy.’

“We fastened the lower end round one of the thwarts of the boat, and then he began to climb. It was near five minutes before he got to the top, for there were some nasty places where the cliff jutted out, and the rope was hard against it; but presently the shaking ceased, and a minute later the light line was hauled tight. There was a low cheer in the boats, and then up went the rope ladder. A minute or two later there was a hail from the top.

“ ‘All taut, sir.’

“ ‘I will go first,’ Mr. Earnshaw said.

“Accordingly up he went, and one by one we followed, each waiting for the signal that the one before him had gone up, till all had gone except the two told off as boat watch. Then the men of the launch and cutters followed, and in about two hours they were all at the top, and a lantern was shown to tell the ship we were there.

“We started at once across the island, Mr. Earnshaw keeping the line by a pocket compass. It was rough work, though, and at last the lieutenant said: ‘We make such a noise going through the bushes that we had better wait till daylight, so just halt where you are, lads.’

“As soon as the first ray of light showed we were off again, and an hour later reached the edge of the slope down to the cove.

“ ‘Now, remember,’ the lieutenant said, ‘that no woman is to be hurt. All the men who resist

are to be shot or cut down; but you are to take prisoners all who throw down their arms. Some of them may be able to prove themselves less guilty than the rest. At any rate, there is no fear of the Spanish authorities being too merciful. These pirates have been the scourge of these seas for the last six years.'

"Well, lad, there ain't much more to tell you. We took them completely by surprise, and the men in the village were all knocked down and bound, without firing a shot. The men in the batteries tried to slew their guns round, but we didn't give 'em time. They fought desperately, for they knew what their doom was, and there weren't any prisoners taken there. As soon as the village was taken I went straight with Mr. Escombe to the captain's house. His wife was standing at the door, and she gave a little cry as she saw the British uniforms, and ran a step or two to meet us, then she stopped, and her arms dropped by her side.

"'What! you, Peter!' she said as we came up. 'Is it you who led them here?'

"'Yes, ma'am, it was me,' says I, 'and the best thing I could do for you, for you could not wish to stay here all your life with just the people that are here.'

"'But what has happened?' she said. 'How is it you are here? What has become of the schooner?'

"'The schooner is sunk, ma'am, and the brig is captured.'

“ ‘And my husband?’

“ ‘Well, ma’am, don’t you take on, but your husband went down with the schooner.’

“She tottered, and I thought she would have fallen, but Mr. Escombe put his arm round her and led her to the house and left her there, putting two sailors on guard to see as she wasn’t disturbed. An hour or two later the frigate was off the cove, and the captain landed. We stopped a week there, and carried off all there was worth taking; and I tell you there was enough to give every man-jack on board a handsome share of prize money when the things came to be sold afterwards.

“Money, there was lots of it all stored away in what they called the treasure house, for money was no good there. Jewels and ornaments, watches, and the things which they uses in them Catholic churches, and all kinds of valuable things, and stores of silks and velvets and all kind of materials; and as to wine and suchlike, there was enough to have lasted them for years, for from first to last it was shown afterwards that those fellows must have captured more nor fifty vessels. Why they shouldn’t have stopped ashore and enjoyed what they got was a mystery to me. But I suppose they couldn’t do without excitement, and though every man talked of the time when the treasure would be divided and they were to scatter, I don’t suppose as one ever expected as the time would really come.

“Well, arter everything was on board, and the



women and children, the place was burnt, and we sailed for the nearest Spanish port. We had had a sort of court martial on board the frigate, and two or three young chaps like myself, and two men as was proved to have been captured in the pirate's last cruise, and who hadn't been to sea with them or taken part in any of their bloody doings, was kept on board ship, and the rest was handed over to the Spanish authorities. Most of them was garrotted, and a few was condemned to work on the roads for life. I and the others was taken back to England in the frigate, whose foreign time was up, and when we got to Portsmouth we was drafted into a regiment there, and lucky we thought ourselves to get off so easy. The captain's wife and some of the other white women came home to England on board the frigate. She was very low at first, but she brightened up a good deal towards the end of the voyage, which lasted two months. She grieved over her husband, you see, but she couldn't but have felt that it was all for the best. I heard afterwards as how two years after she married Mr. Earnshaw, who by that time had got to be a captain. So that, you see, my lad, is how I came to fight under the black flag first and then to be a soldier of the queen. I didn't mean it to be sich a long yarn, but when I once began it all came back to me, and, you see, I haven't spoken of it for years. You don't think altogether as I was very wrong, I hope."

"I thank you very much for your story, sergeant," Jack replied. "I only wish it had been

longer; and although it's very easy to say that a man ought to die rather than consent to be a pirate, I don't think there are many lads who would choose death if they were placed as you were."

"I am glad to think that, young un, it's always been a sore point with me. I have done my duty since, and no one can say as he's ever seen Sergeant Edwards show the white feather. But the thought that that once I did not act as a brave man would have done has always troubled me."

The next day, as the sea went down, and the recruits recovered from the effects of the confinement and sickness, they again began to talk among themselves. The fact that all the other vessels of the fleet were out of sight naturally encouraged them. Jack observed, however, that the call to parade on deck was answered with more quickness than before, and the exercises were gone through with a painstaking steadiness greater than had been shown since the embarkation. When the men were dismissed from parade Jack remarked this to the sergeant.

"Ay, ay, lad, I noticed it too," the sergeant said, shaking his head, "and in my opinion it's a bad sign. They want to throw the officers off their guard. It's a pity you have been seen talking so much to me, because, of course, they won't say anything when you are listening; but one or two of the men who came into the regiment with me have dropped a word as they happened to pass this morning that they wanted to have a word if

they could get one without being noticed, so I hope to hear a little more to-night."

That evening, before going below, Jack had an hour's talk with Sergeant Edwards.

"It's just as I thought," the latter said, "they've got an idea of seizing the ship. The men I spoke of managed to get a few words with me this evening. They don't know any about piracy. All they have heard is that there is a proposal to seize the ship and to carry her into one of the northern ports of Spain, where the men will land and give up their arms to the Spanish authorities, and then either disperse and make their way home by twos and threes as best they can, or they will take service with the King of Spain, who, they think, will pay them a deal better than the English government.

"A part of the crew are in the scheme. These, the men tell me, do not intend to land, but only tell the others that they shall sail away. That's about what I thought would be. The greater part of these fellows only wants to get quickly home again, while the sailors, who may want to go a-buccaneering, would not care about having the soldiers with them. I shall give a hint to the captain of my company to-night as to what is going on, but I don't much expect he will pay any attention to it. Officers never believe these things till it is too late, and you see I can't give them any names yet or prove what I say; besides, likely enough, any enquiry set on foot would only bring the matter to a head. We must wait till we know something sure.

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“You keep your ears open, my boy, and your eyes too, and I will do the same. If it comes, and you see a chance of warning the captain of the ship or the first lieutenant in time, you do it; but don’t you do it if you don’t think there’s time enough, or if you can’t do it without being seen. If it’s too late, and you are found out, they would just chuck you overboard or knock you on the head, and you will have done no good after all, and perhaps only caused bloodshed. Like enough, if matters go quietly, there won’t be no bloodshed, and the officers and those who stick to them will just be turned adrift in the boats, or maybe handed over to the Spanish at the port they go into as prisoners.”

Jack promised to follow the sergeant’s instructions, and went below. He thought that the men were unusually quiet, and taking his blanket—for although some of the soldiers slept in hammocks, the majority lay on the deck wrapped in their blankets—he lay down by the side of a gun whose port had been opened to admit air between decks. After thinking the matter over for some time, and wondering what would be the end of it, he dropped off into a light sleep.

Presently he was aroused by a confused sound. Looking round cautiously, he saw by the dim light of the lantern that most of the men were on their feet. Some of them were taking down their fire-arms from the arm racks; small groups were stooping over some of the sleeping figures; and to the mast, close to which one of the lanterns hung, two or three men were bound, and two soldiers with

pikes were standing by them. The crisis, then, had come, and Jack at once proceeded to carry out the plan he had thought out after he lay down.

Very quietly he crawled out through the porthole, and then raised himself and stood on the muzzle of the gun. There he could reach the foot of the shrouds of the foremast, which happened to be immediately above the port. He swung himself up, and, placing his hands on the edge of the bulwark, cautiously looked over.

At present all was quiet there, the signal from below had not been given, and the troops on deck—for, owing to the numbers on board, one-fourth were always on deck in fine weather—were standing about or sitting in groups. Keeping his feet on the ledge which ran round level with the deck, and his fingers on the top of the bulwark, Jack managed to edge his way aft until he reached the line of the quarterdeck. Here the line of the bulwark ceased, the cabins of the officers rising, as was usual in those days, in a double tier high about the waist.

The nearest porthole, which was open, was but three feet along, and Jack, reaching forward, put one hand in it and continued his way. The porthole was but just large enough for him to squeeze through. Looking in before he attempted it he saw an officer asleep immediately below him. It was the ensign of his own company. Leaning in he touched him gently. After one or two attempts, the young officer opened his eyes, saying: "What is it? It's not morning yet,"

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"Hush, sir," Jack said earnestly, "I am Jack Stilwell of your company. There is a mutiny, sir, forward. Please help me in, I want to warn the captain of the ship, and he will know what to do."

The young officer leapt from his bunk and assisted Jack to enter.

"I will come with you," he said, hastily dragging on his trousers and coat. "Are you sure of what you say?"

"Quite sure, sir; the non-commissioned officers are bound; it may begin at any moment." The ensign led the way to the captain's cabin, which he opened and entered without ceremony.

"What is it?" the captain exclaimed. The ensign said who he was, and Jack repeated his story.

"The dogs!" the captain said, "we will teach them a lesson. Let me see, the second lieutenant is on duty; rouse all the other officers;" and he himself assisted them to do so. In a minute or two they were gathered hastily attired, with sword and pistol, in the captain's cabin.

"Do you, Mr. Hartwell," the captain said, addressing the first lieutenant, "go below and rouse the boatswain and petty officers, and bid them get together all the men they can depend upon, arm them quietly, and be ready to rush on deck the instant a stir is heard forward among the soldiers. Any man who disobeys orders, shoot him instantly. Do you, sir," he said to the second officer, "go to the magazine with four of the midshipmen, open it and bring up charges of grape for the guns on

the quarterdeck. Be as quick as you can. Now, gentlemen, the rest of us will make our way up quietly, one by one, to the quarterdeck. Go well aft, so that the men in the waist will not notice you. Directly the cartridges come up we will load the guns, and be in readiness to slew them across the deck; and in the meantime, if they should attack before we are ready, we must hold the ladders to the last."

One by one the officers stole out from the cabin with bare feet, and made their way up to the quarterdeck, until some thirty of them were gathered there, being all the officers of the regiment, the naval officers, and midshipmen. The night was a dark one, and this was accomplished without the movement being noticed by any of those in the waist of the ship.

CHAPTER VI

A Commission

THE moments passed slowly and anxiously, for, if the mutineers were to pour up from below before the cartridges arrived and the lieutenant had got the petty officers and men on whom they could rely ready for action, it was improbable that the officers would be able successfully to oppose the rush of the men, armed as these would be with matchlock and pike.

The mutineers, however, believing that there was no occasion to hurry, were quietly carrying out their intentions. The non-commissioned officers had all been seized, tied, and placed under sentries, whose orders were to pike them if they uttered a word. A strong guard had been placed at the foot of the gangway to prevent any of the soldiers who were not in the plan from going on deck and giving the alarm. The muskets were not loaded, as on embarkation all ball cartridges had, as usual, been stowed away in the magazine; but they reckoned upon obtaining possession of this at the first rush. The ringleaders proceeded to form the men in fours, so that they could pour on to the deck in military order. The men of each company

were told off to separate work. Two companies were to clear the decks, where, on their appearance, they would be joined by their comrades there, and to overpower any sailors who might offer resistance.

Another company was to run down and secure the magazine, and, breaking it open, to serve out cartridges to all. Two other companies were to rush aft and overpower the officers, the sixth and seventh were to form round the head of the hatchway leading to the decks where the sailors slept, and to allow only those to come on deck who had entered into the plot. The other three companies were already on deck. The arrangements were excellent, but the care taken in preparing for them, and the necessity for doing this in silence lest the stir should be heard and an alarm be given on deck, occupied time which the officers were turning to advantage.

As soon as the captain and naval men had gained the quarterdeck they threw off the lashings of the guns, and had all in readiness for running them in and taking them aft to the edge of the quarterdeck. There was a deep sensation of relief as one after another the midshipmen joined them, each carrying three cartridges of grape, and followed by the gunner with four more. The lieutenant was to stay below to lead the sailors on to the deck.

The gunner brought a message saying that all was well. Many of the sailors were found to have turned into their hammocks without undressing,

and to have handpikes or cutlasses concealed beneath the clothes. These, however, had been surprised and taken without the slightest noise; as, on finding a lantern on one side of their heads and a pistol on the other, each had submitted without the slightest resistance. All these had been sent down to the hold below, and a guard placed over them. The guns were loaded and the whole of the officers divided among them in readiness to run them forward. Four or five minutes passed, then a shout was heard forward and a low rush of many feet.

In an instant the four guns on the quarterdeck were run across. While this was being done there was a clashing of swords, shouts, and a noise of conflict heard forward, and at the same time a loud cheer arose, while from the after hatchway a dark body of men rushed up on to the deck and formed across it. Some midshipmen, who had been told off for the duty, ran up from the officers' cabin with lighted lanterns, which were ranged along at the edge of the quarterdeck.

There was a rush aft of the mutineers, but these recoiled astonished at the sight of the pikes which confronted them, and the line of sailors four-deep across the deck, while at the same moment the light of the lanterns showed them the officers on the quarterdeck, and the four guns pointed threateningly towards them. For a moment a silence of astonishment and dismay succeeded the uproar which had preceded it, then the captain's voice was heard:

“Down with your arms, you mutinous dogs, or I will blow you into the air. It is useless to resist. We are prepared for you, and you are without ammunition. Throw down the arms on the decks, every man of you, before I count three, or I fire. One—two——”

There was a loud clattering of arms, mingled with shouts of:

“We surrender; don’t fire, sir, don’t fire.”

“It’s all over,” the captain said grimly. “Mr. Hartwell, march your men forward, shoot any scoundrel instantly whom you find with arms in his hands, collect all the weapons and bring them aft.

“Now, Colonel Clifford,” he said, turning to the officer in command of the regiment, “if you go below with the officers, you can unloose the non-commissioned officers; they will be able to point out to you the ringleaders in this business. They had better be ironed at once and put into the hold. You will have no more trouble now, I fancy.”

In ten minutes the whole of the arms had been collected and stored up, the non-commissioned officers had pointed out some twenty of the ringleaders, and these were safely in irons below, while a strong guard of armed sailors was placed between decks to see that there was no renewal of insubordinate conduct. There was, however, no fear of this; the men were thoroughly cowed and humiliated by the failure of their plan, and each was occupied only in hoping that he had not been sufficiently con-

spicuous to be handed over in the morning to join the prisoners below.

There was no more sleep that night on board the ship. After breakfast two court martials were held, the one by the naval the other by the military officers. The latter sentenced two men, who were convicted on the testimony of the non-commissioned officers as having been the leaders, to be hung, and the sentence was at once carried out. The regiment was formed in close order on deck unarmed and witnessed the execution of their comrades, who were hung up to the extremities of the mainyard. The other prisoners were sentenced to two hundred lashes apiece—a punishment which was, according to the ideas of the time, very lenient, such a punishment being frequently administered for comparatively trifling offences, and the prisoners considered themselves fortunate in escaping hanging, for which, indeed, they had prepared themselves.

Previous to the administration of their punishment the colonel addressed the men, and told them that all the ringleaders had been found guilty and sentenced to death, but that the members of the court martial had agreed with him that, considering the youth and inexperience of the offenders and the whole circumstances of the case, it would be possible to remit the death sentence, confident that the prisoners and the whole of the regiment would recognize the leniency with which they had been treated, and would return to their duty with a firm and hearty determination to do all in their

power to atone for their misconduct, and to show themselves true and worthy soldiers of the queen. If this was the case, no further notice would be taken of the error; but at the same time he warned them, that he had by him a long list of men who had taken a prominent part in the affair, and that the first time any of these misconducted themselves they might be well assured that no mercy would be shown to them.

The naval court martial showed no greater severity than that administered by the military officers. The vessel was short-handed, and moreover the officers did not wish the stigma to attach to the ship of a serious mutiny among the crew. Had any of these been hung, the matter must have been reported; but as none of the crew had absolutely taken part in the rising, however evident it was that they intended to do so, no sentences of death were passed. But a number of the men were sentenced to be flogged more or less severely, those who had but lately been pressed getting off with comparatively light punishments, while the heaviest sentences were passed on the older hands concerned in the affair.

The arms of the troops continued to be kept under a strong guard until, ten days later, the rest of the fleet were seen, just as the northern point of Portugal was made out. A few hours later the fleet was united; and the next day, the wind dying entirely away, Colonel Clifford proceeded in a boat to the flagship to report to the Earl of Peterborough the mutiny which had taken

place in his regiment, and its successtul suppression. Immediately the mutiny had been put down Jack Stilwell had stolen away and rejoined the soldiers forward; and although there was much wonder among the men as to how the affair had been discovered, none suspected him of having betrayed them, and believed that the officers must have been warned by some word incautiously let drop in their hearing. Only to Sergeant Edwards did Jack reveal what had taken place.

“Do you know, lad, I guessed as you had had a hand in the business somehow. When I was standing tied up against the mast I had to keep my mouth shut; but I had the use of my eyes, and I could not make you out among them. I might have missed you, of course; but your company was formed up close to where I was standing, and I thought I should have seen you if you had been there. I could not think what had become of you; but when the men came pouring down again without their arms, and I heard them cursing and swearing because the sailors and the officers, and all was found in readiness to receive them, it somehow came to my mind as that you was at the bottom of it—though how, I could not for the life of me make out, for I knew you had gone below when I did.”

“I wish, sergeant, that when you are examined, as you will be about this affair, you will ask Captain Curtis to ask the colonel not to let it be known publicly that it was I who warned him, for my life would be unbearable among the men if they knew

it. And if it didn't happen before, it would be certain that the first time we went into action I should get a bullet in my back."

"You are right there, my lad. I will tell the captain. You may be sure your conduct won't be overlooked; but at present, as you say, the less said about it the better."

An hour after Colonel Clifford had gone on board the flagship the boat returned with orders that Private Stilwell of D Company was to go back with them. The order was given to Captain Curtis, who sent first for Sergeant Edwards.

"Go forward, sergeant, and tell Stilwell that he is to go on board the flagship. No doubt the colonel has spoken to the general. Tell the lad apart, and let him make his way aft here to the gangway quietly, so that he won't be noticed. If any of the men happen to see him going off in the boat, they may suppose that the colonel has only sent for some man who can write; and naturally if the captain had ordered me to choose a man, I should have picked him out."

On reaching the deck of the flagship Jack was conducted to the admiral's cabin. At the head of the table was seated a man whom Jack recognized at once, from the description he had heard of him, as the Earl of Peterborough. He was small and very spare in person, his features were pleasant, his nose somewhat prominent, his eye lively and penetrating. He had laid aside the immense wig which, in accordance with the custom, he wore when abroad or at court in England; and Jack saw

his hair, which was light-brown and somewhat scanty. The admiral of the fleet sat next to him; for although Peterborough had the command of the expedition both at land and sea, an admiral was in command of the fleet under him. Colonel Clifford was seated on the earl's left, and several other naval and military officers were at the table.

"Well, young man," Peterborough said, "Colonel Clifford has been telling us that it is due to you that I have not a regiment the less under my orders, and that her majesty has not lost a ship from the list of her navy. He says that the whole thing was so quickly done that he has not been able to learn the full particulars from you, and that he has abstained from questioning you because you did not wish any suspicion to be excited among the men of the part you played in it. Now, please to tell me the whole history of the affair."

Jack thereupon related how his suspicions had been aroused by Sergeant Edwards, who was only waiting for sufficient opportunity and a certainty of information to divulge the plot to the officers. He then related his awaking as the mutiny began, and the steps he had taken to warn the officers. When he had done, the earl said:

"You have acted smartly and well, young man; you have shown promptness, courage, and fidelity. You speak above your rank, what is your parentage?"

"My father was a clergyman, sir," Jack said, "but, being dispossessed of his living in the troubles, could not make his case known on the

return of King Charles; but he supported himself by teaching, and gave me such education as he could, in hope that I too should enter the ministry. But my thoughts did not incline that way; and when he died, and also my mother, I thought of going to sea, when it happened that I was pressed for a soldier. And seeing that it was so, I made up my mind to make the best of things."

"And you have done so, young man; and right glad am I that your education and parentage are such that I can reward you as I should wish. I give you a discharge now from your regiment and appoint you ensign. You will at present form one of my staff; and glad am I to have so dashing and able a young officer ready to hand for any perilous service I may require."

On the 20th of June the fleet sailed up the Tagus.

Jack had not returned on board his ship.

"Better stop here," the earl said. "If you went back, and they heard you were promoted, likely enough some of them might toss you overboard on a dark night. We will set the tailors at once to work to rig you up an undress uniform. You can get a full dress made at Lisbon. Not that you will be wanting to wear that much, for we have come out for rough work; still, when we ride triumphantly into any town we have taken, it is as well to make a good impression upon the Spanish donnas. And, say what they will, fine feathers go a long way towards making fine birds. Do you write a good hand?"

"I think I write a pretty fair one, sir."

"That is good. I write a crabbed stick myself, and there's nothing I hate more than writing; and as for these young gentlemen, I don't think they will be of much use for that sort of thing. However, I shan't have a great deal of it. But you shall act as my secretary when necessary."

The earl's orders to the tailors were peremptory to lose no time in fitting Jack with an undress suit, and in twenty-four hours he was able to join the mess of the young officers and volunteers who accompanied the general. These were all young men of good family; and having heard how Jack had saved the ship from mutiny, they received him among them with great heartiness, which was increased when they found that he was well educated and the son of a gentleman.

It was a great satisfaction to Jack that, owing to the kindness and generosity of the earl, he was able to pay his expenses at mess and to live on equal terms with them; for the general had dropped a purse with a hundred guineas into his hand, saying:

"This will be useful to you, lad, for you must live like the other officers. I owe it to you many times over for having saved me that regiment, upon whose equipment and fitting out I had spent wellnigh a hundred times that sum."

Some of the officers were but little older than Jack, and by the time the ship dropped anchor in the Tagus he was quite at home with them.

"What a lovely city!" he said as he leant over

the bulwark and looked at the town standing on the steep hills sloping down to the river.

"Yes, indeed," Graham, one of the young officers, agreed. "But I fancy the Portuguese are but poor creatures. The Earl of Galway writes in his despatches that they are great at promises, but he finds he can expect little assistance from them."

"Have you any idea whether we are going to land here?"

"No; wherever we land, you may be sure it won't be here. The Earl of Galway has been here two or three months, and he has some good regiments with him. Our chief would be losing his position did we land here, as he has a separate command, and would of course be under Galway if the forces were joined. The Dutch fleet is to be here in a day or two, and the Archduke Charles sailed a fortnight before we did; and as we have made a very slow voyage of it, he ought to have been here long ago. What a talk there will be! What with the archduke, and the Portuguese, and the Dutch, and the Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt, and the Earls of Galway and Peterborough, and probably every one of them with his own ideas and opinions, it will be hard to come to any arrangement. Besides there will be despatches from the British court, and the court of the Netherlands, and the Austrian emperor, all of whom will probably differ as to what is the best thing to be done. There will be a nice to-do altogether. There's one thing to be said, our chief can outtalk them all;

and he can say such disagreeable things when he likes that he will be likely to get his own way, if it's only to get rid of him. There goes his boat into the water. What an impatient fellow he is, to be sure!"

No sooner had Peterborough landed than he turned all his energies to obtain the supplies which had been denied to him at home, and after much difficulty he succeeded in borrowing a hundred thousand pounds from a Jew named Curtis on treasury bills on Lord Godolphin, with the condition that the lender should be given the contract for the supply of provisions and other requisites for the army. The day that the earl had carried out this arrangement he returned on board radiant. Hitherto he had been terribly out of temper, and Jack, who had become his amanuensis, had written at his dictation many very sharp notes to everyone with whom he had come in contact. As soon as he came on board he sent for Jack to his cabin.

"Sit down, Mr. Stilwell, I have a despatch for you to write to the lord treasurer. I have got my money, so that difficulty is at an end. It is glorious! I couldn't get a penny out of them before I sailed, now I have got as much as I want. I would give a thousand guineas out of my own pocket to see Godolphin's face when he reads my despatch, and finds that he's got to honour bills for a hundred thousand pounds; it will be better than any comedy that ever was acted. How the pompous old owl will fret and fume! But he will have to find the money for all that. He can't begin the campaign

by dishonouring bills of her majesty's general, or no one would trust us hereafter. You haven't seen my lord treasurer, Mr. Stilwell?"

"No, sir, I have not been at court at all."

"That's a pity," the earl said; "for you lose the cream of the joke. Now, I shall go on shore to-morrow and get everything that is wanted, and then the sooner we are off the better; we have been here a fortnight, and I am sick of the place."

Jack was by no means sick of Lisbon, for he enjoyed himself vastly. The town was full of troops—English, Dutch, and Portuguese. Of an evening there were fetes and galas of all kinds, and as the earl always attended these, Jack and the other young officers were permitted to go ashore either in full uniform to take part in the fetes, or to enjoy themselves according to their fancies.

As Graham had predicted it was some time before any conclusion was arrived at as to the destination of the fleet. Several councils were held, but no decision was come to. Peterborough's orders were so vague that he could use his own discretion. He had, indeed, been recommended to prevail upon the Archduke Charles to accompany him and to proceed to Italy, where he was to form a junction with Victor Amadeus, Duke of Savoy, who was sorely pressed by the armies of France.

A messenger, however, arrived by sea with an order from the queen that the fleet should proceed to the coast of Catalonia, in consequence of infor-

mation which had been sent to the British court of the favourable disposition of the Catalans towards the Archduke Charles. This was in accordance with the counsel which the Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt had been strenuously urging, and his recent success in the capture and subsequent defence of Gibraltar gave weight to his words and effaced the recollection of his failure before Barcelona in the previous year.

The final decision rested in a great measure with the Archduke Charles, who at last decided to proceed with Lord Peterborough and land upon the coast of Spain and test the disposition of his Valencian and Catalan subjects. The reasons for Peterborough's falling in with the decision to move on Barcelona are explained in a despatch which he dictated to Sir George Rooke on the 20th of July.

"Upon the letter of my Lord Godolphin and the secretary of state, the King of Spain, his ministers, and my Lord Galway and myself have concluded there was no other attempt to be made but upon Catalonia, where all advices agree that 6000 men and 1200 horse are ready expecting our arrival with a general goodwill of all the people. The Portuguese have entirely refused to join in any design against Cadiz, and by a copy of my Lord Galway's letter you will find he is in an utter despair of their attempting anything this year, and that by our instructions it will appear that there is no other enterprise left for our choice."

Peterborough's military force was, however, wholly insufficient for such an enterprise. He

prevailed upon Lord Galway to give him a part of Lord Raby's and General Cunningham's regiments of English dragoons, although the Portuguese strenuously opposed this being done. Their conduct, indeed, at this time was very similar to that which they adopted a hundred years later towards the Duke of Wellington, throwing every conceivable obstacle in the English commander's ways and opposing every plan of action which he suggested. Many of the dragoons were without horses, but Lord Peterborough mounted them on animals which he bought with some of the money he had procured from Curtisos.

The Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt went on ahead to Gibraltar to arrange for a portion of the garrison to accompany the expedition. On the 28th of July the Archduke Charles embarked with Lord Peterborough on board the *Ranelagh*, and an hour later the fleet put to sea. Off Tangiers they were joined by the squadron under Sir Cloudesley Shovel, and a few days later they reached the Bay of Gibraltar.

Here they found that the Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt had arranged that the battalion of the guards, with three other veteran regiments that had borne part in the gallant defence of the fortress, were to be embarked, and two of the newly-raised corps Lord Peterborough had brought out from England were to take their place in the garrison. The regiment to which Jack had belonged was one of these. As soon as he heard the news he took the first opportunity of speaking to the earl.

"I have a favour to ask, sir."

“What is that, lad?”

“It is, sir, that Sergeant Edwards, who, if you remember, advised me about warning the officers of the mutiny, should be transferred to one of the regiments coming on board.”

“Certainly, my lad; I had not forgotten him. I only wish that he had sufficient education to give him a commission. I sent to enquire of his colonel, but finding that he could not read or write, and that he would be out of place among the officers, I could not do it; but I will gladly take him with us on active service. It would be hard on a good soldier to be left behind with that mutinous set of rascals.”

Jack had already heard from Sergeant Edwards, whom he had met several times on shore at Lisbon, and who had rejoiced most heartily at his promotion, that Lord Peterborough had sent him, through the colonel, a purse of fifty guineas as a reward for his conduct.

Jack immediately proceeded in a boat to his old vessel, with an order from the earl that the sergeant should be at once transferred into one of the regiments coming on board. The sergeant was delighted, for orders had already been received for the regiment to disembark and form part of the garrison.

An hour later the Archduke Charles landed, amid the thunder of the guns of the fleet and fortress, for here for the first time he was acknowledged as, and received the honour due to the King of Spain. There was but little delay—Lord Peterborough’s energy hurried everyone else for-

ward, and on the 5th of August the fleet again put to sea, the king and the Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt accompanying it.

The winds were contrary, and it was not till the 11th that they anchored in Altea Bay, at the mouth of the Guadalaviar, on the Valencian coast. On the other side of the roadstead stood the castle and village of Denia. The expedition was received with goodwill by the people, who hated the ascendancy of France at Madrid and were bitterly jealous of Castille.

As soon as the fleet anchored Peterborough caused a manifesto to be distributed among the people disclaiming any idea of aggrandizement on the part of Great Britain or her allies, or any intention of injuring the persons or property of Spaniards who were the lawful subjects of King Charles III. "We come," said he, "to free you from the insupportable yoke of the government of foreigners, and from the slavery to which you have been reduced and sold to France by ill-designing persons."

Several of the Spanish followers of the king landed to encourage the people, among them General Basset y Ramos, an active officer who was a Valencian by birth. The people rapidly assembled from the surrounding country and lined the shore shouting, "Long live King Charles III!" Abundant supplies of provisions were sent off to the fleet, for which, however, Peterborough insisted upon liberal payment being made.

A detachment of British infantry was landed to

cover the operation of watering the fleet. The insurrection spread rapidly, and a thousand of the peasants seized the town of Denia for the king. A frigate and two bomb-vessels crossed the bay and threatened the castle. This, although a magnificent pile of building, was but weakly fortified, and after a few shots had been fired it surrendered, and General Ramos with 400 regular troops from the fleet landed and took possession, and amid the enthusiasm of the population Charles III was for the first time on Spanish ground proclaimed King of Spain and of the Indies.

The Earl of Peterborough now proposed a plan of the most brilliant and daring kind, and had his advice been taken the war would probably have terminated in a very short time, by securely seating Charles III upon the Spanish throne. Madrid was distant but fifty leagues from Altea Bay. Requeña was the only town of strength that lay in the way; the rich country would have afforded ample provision and means of transport, and these the friendly portion of the people would have placed at the disposal of the army.

In the whole of Central Spain there was no force which could oppose him. All the troops of Philip were either on the frontier of Portugal or occupying the disaffected cities of the north. At Madrid there were but a few troops of horse; in a week then, and possibly without shedding a drop of blood, Charles might have been proclaimed king in the capital of Spain. The plan was, of course, not without danger. Marshal Tessé, with an over-

whelming force, would threaten the left of the advancing army, and the garrisons of the northern cities, if united, could march with equal superiority of force upon its right; but Tessé would be followed by Lord Galway and the allied and Portuguese army, while Barcelona and the other strongholds of Catalonia would rise if their garrisons were withdrawn.

Even in the case of failure Peterborough could have retired safely through Valencia and have re-embarked on board the fleet, or could have marched to Gibraltar. The scheme was at once daring and judicious, but the Archduke Charles was slow and timid, and was controlled by the advice of his even slower and more cautious German advisers, and neither argument nor entreaty, on the part of Peterborough, could suffice to move him. The earl was in despair at so brilliant an opportunity being thrown away, and expressed himself with the greatest of bitterness in his letters home as to the impossibility of carrying out movements when embarrassed by the presence of the king and the incapacity of the king's advisers.

However, finding that nothing could be done he re-embarked his troops, and the fleet sailed for Barcelona. It was not, however, thought probable that a successful attempt could be made upon so strongly fortified a city, and it was determined that if upon inspection the chances of success should appear slight, the fleet and army should at once proceed, as originally intended, to the assistance of the Duke of Savoy.

CHAPTER VII

Barcelona

THE city of Barcelona, one of the most populous and important in Spain, is not naturally a place of great strength. It is situated on a plain close to the sea, and its defences, although extensive, were not very formidable against a strong army provided with a siege train. To hold them fully required a much larger force than was disposable for the defence. The garrison was, however, fully equal in strength to the force of Peterborough, and should have been able to defend the city against an army vastly exceeding their own numbers. Ten bastions and some old towers protected the town towards the north and east; between the city and the sea was a long rampart with an unfinished ditch and covered way; while to the west, standing on a lofty elevation, the castle of Montjuich overlooked and guarded the walls of the city.

From the centre of the sea face a mole projected into the water, guarding a small harbour. The country round the town was fertile and beautiful, carefully cultivated and watered by streams flowing from the neighbouring mountains. At the distance of about a league from the shore the land rises into

an amphitheatre of hills thickly dotted with small towns, villages, and country seats.

As soon as the allied fleet had anchored the garrison commenced a cannonade from the mole and from a battery close to the sea upon some of the transports nearest to the shore; but their shot did not reach the vessels, and the fire soon ceased. The east wind, however, proved more troublesome than the enemy's fire, and the ships rolled heavily from the sea which came in from the east.

The Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt with two frigates put into the harbour of Mataro for the purpose of obtaining intelligence. He found that in the neighbouring town of Vich the people had risen for King Charles, and putting himself in communication with their leaders he advised them to march upon the coast and co-operate with the forces about to land. On his way to rejoin the fleet the prince chased two Neapolitan galleys, which, however, managed to get safely into Barcelona.

They had on board the Duke and Duchess of Popoli, M. d'Abary, a French officer of distinction, and forty other young gentlemen, partisans of the Duke d'Anjou, and destined for employment in different parts of Spain. They were now, however, detained in the city by the governor to assist in its defence.

The first glance into the state of affairs gave the Earl of Peterborough such an unfavourable impression that he at once objected to the proposed attack.

The governor, Don Francisco Velasco, was a brave and distinguished officer, the garrison

equalled his own force in numbers, the town was well supplied with provisions and stores, and, in order to add to the difficulties of the besiegers, orders had been given to destroy all the forage in the surrounding country which could not be conveyed within the walls. Any Austrian sympathies the inhabitants might possess were effectually suppressed by the power and vigilance of the governor. The besieging army was far too small to attempt a blockade, while the chances of an assault upon an equal force behind well-armed defences seemed almost desperate.

The engineers declared that the difficulties of a regular siege were enormous if not insurmountable, and that the only vulnerable point was covered by a bog, where the transport of cannon or the formation of works would be impossible. Above all, the principal hope of the expedition had failed. The adherents of Charles had assured him that the whole country would rise in his favour on the arrival of the fleet, and that the town itself would probably open its gates to receive him. These promises had, like all others he had received from his Spanish friends, proved delusive. Few of the peasantry appeared to receive them on the coast, and these were unarmed and without officers.

The earl's instructions, although generally quite indefinite, were stringent upon one point. He was on no account to make the slightest alteration in the plans of the expedition, or to take any decisive step for their accomplishment, without the advice of the council of war. This would have been in

any case embarrassing for a general, in the present instance it was calculated altogether to cripple him. There was but little harmony among the chief officers. The English military officers were by no means on good terms with each other, while the naval officers regarded almost as an insult Lord Peterborough's being placed in command of them. The English hated the German officers and despised the Dutch. Lord Peterborough himself disliked almost all his associates, and entertained a profound contempt for anyone whose opinion might differ from that which he at the moment might happen to hold.

It was impossible that good could come from a council of war composed of such jarring elements as these. However, Lord Peterborough's instructions were positive, and on the 16th of August, 1705, he convened a council of war on board the *Britannia*, consisting of nine generals and a brigadier, with two colonels on the staff. The king and the Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt were present, but took no part in the deliberations. Singularly enough the council proved unanimous in their opinion that Barcelona should not be attacked. The reasons for the decision were drawn up and put on record. The council pointed out all the difficulties which existed, and declared the strength of the allied army to be only nineteen battalions of foot and two cavalry regiments, of whom no more than 7000 men were fit for action, and only 120 dragoon horses had survived the voyage in serviceable condition.

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The decision of the council was most opposed to the hopes and wishes of Charles and the Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt, and they addressed letters of strong remonstrance to Lord Peterborough, urging that to abandon the expedition at this juncture would be alike fatal to the common cause and discreditable to the British arms.

Meanwhile, however, the greater part of the troops had landed without opposition; but the sea broke with such force on the beach that much difficulty had been experienced in getting ashore. The landing place had been well chosen by Lord Peterborough and Sir Cloudesley Shovel. It was about two miles east of the city, near a place called Badalona, and close to the mouth of the little river Basoz. The transports were moored in as close as possible, and the boats of the fleet carried three thousand men ashore each trip.

In five hours fifteen battalions were landed without the loss of a man. A strong natural position about a mile from the city was chosen for the encampment; its left rested on the sea, its right was covered by several abrupt hills and defiles through which the river Basoz flowed. The front was, however, much extended, but this mattered the less, as the people from the neighbouring villages began to assemble when the landing took place, and welcomed the allies of King Charles with joy. A number of these were employed by Lord Peterborough in guarding the advanced posts and covering the numerous roads leading from the city towards the camp.

On the 22nd another council of war was held at the Dutch General Schratenbach's quarters in the camp to consider two letters of the king, in which he again urged the allied generals to attack the city. He proposed that a battery of fifty guns should be erected to breach the wall between two of the bastions, and that the whole strength of the army should be thrown upon an assault. He acknowledged the force of the several objections to the attack, but urged that in such a case vigorous action was the safest. He dwelt upon the ruin that must fall upon such of his subjects as had declared for him if abandoned to their fate, and concluded by declaring that he at least would not desert them.

The appeal failed to move any of the council with the exception of Peterborough himself, and he alone voted, although in opposition to his own judgment, in compliance with the king's plan. Notwithstanding the adverse decision of the council the horses and dragoons were landed on the 24th.

On the 25th, the 26th, and the 28th the council again assembled to deliberate upon an earnest request of the king that they should attempt the siege for a period of eighteen days. The first decision was adverse, two only voting with Lord Peterborough for the siege. At the second council, his influence succeeded in obtaining a majority; but at the third, they agreed to abandon the attempt, even the commander-in-chief concurring.

The cause of this sudden reversal of their opinion was, that none of the workmen whom they had de-

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manded from the leaders of the Catalan peasantry had appeared, and they felt it impossible to carry on the works and erect the siege batteries without such assistance. Nevertheless the peasantry gave effectual aid in landing the artillery, tents, ammunition, and stores. On the 28th the king landed amid a great concourse of people, who received him with every demonstration of enthusiasm, and he could with difficulty make his way through them to the camp prepared for him near San Martino.

The presence of the king on shore added to the difficulties of the situation. He and his following of German courtiers complained bitterly of the disinclination of the allies to undertake the siege, while the allies were incensed against those who reproached them for not undertaking impossibilities. Dissension spread between the allies themselves, and the Dutch general declared that he would disobey the orders of the commander-in-chief rather than vainly sacrifice his men.

Peterborough was driven nearly out of his mind by the reproaches and recrimination to which he was exposed, and the quarrels which took place around him. He was most anxious to carry out his instructions, and, as far as possible, to defer to the opinion of Charles, but he was also bound by the decisions of the councils of war, which were exactly opposite to the wishes of the king.

The Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt enraged him by insisting that 1500 disorderly peasants whom he had raised were an army, and should be paid as regular soldiers from the military chest, while they

would submit to no discipline, and refused to labour in the trenches, and an open rupture took place, when the prince, in his vexation at the results of the councils of war, even went so far as to accuse the earl of having used secret influence to thwart the enterprise.

To add to the difficulties of the commander-in-chief the English troops were loud in their complaints against him for having landed and committed them to this apparently hopeless enterprise; but they nevertheless clamoured to be led against the town, that they might not be said to have "come like fools and gone like cowards".

Lord Peterborough confided his trouble and vexation freely to his young secretary. Jack was sincerely attached to his generous and eccentric chief, and the general was gratified by the young officer's readiness at all times and hours to come to him and write from his dictation the long letters and despatches which he sent home. He saw, too, that he was thoroughly trustworthy, and could be relied upon to keep absolute silence as to the confidences which he made him.

In the midst of all these quarrels and disputes the siege was carried on in a languid manner. A battery of fifty heavy guns, supplied by the ships and manned by seamen, was placed upon a rising ground flanked by two deep ravines, and on several of the adjacent hills batteries of light field guns had been raised. Three weeks were consumed in these comparatively unimportant operations, and no real advance towards the capture of the place had been

effected. Something like a blockade, however, had been established, for the Catalan peasants guarded vigilantly every approach to the town.

The officers of the fleet were no less discontented than their brethren on shore at the feeble conduct of the siege, and had they been consulted they would have been in favour of a direct attack upon the city with scaling ladders, as if they had been about to board a hostile ship. But Peterborough and his officers were well aware that such an attack against a city defended by a superior force would be simple madness, and even an attack by regular approaches, with the means and labour at their disposal, would have had no chance of success.

But while all on shore and in the fleet were chafing at the slowness and hopelessness of the siege, Jack Stilwell was alone aware that the commander-in-chief did not share in the general despair of any good arising from the operations.

Lord Peterborough had little communication with the other generals; but, alone in his tent with Jack and an interpreter, he occupied himself from morning till night in examining peasants and spies as to every particular of the fortifications of the city, of the ground near to the walls, and of the habits and proceedings of the garrison. At last he resolved upon an attempt, which, in its daring and enterprise, is almost without parallel. Indeed its only hope of success lay in its boldness, for neither friend nor foe could anticipate that it would be attempted. It was no less than the surprise of the citadel of Montjuich.

This formidable stronghold covered the weakest part of the defences, that towards the south-west, and far exceeded in strength any other part of the lines. It had been most skilfully designed. The ditches were deep, and the walls firm; the outworks skilfully planned; the batteries well armed, and the inner defences formidable in themselves. It was, in fact, by far the strongest point in the position of the besieged. Standing on a commanding height it was abundantly capable of defence even against a regular siege, and its reduction was always regarded as a most formidable enterprise, to be undertaken at leisure after the capture of the town. Its only weakness lay in the fact that, surrounding it on every side were numerous ravines and hollows, which would afford concealment to an assailant, and that trusting to the extraordinary strength of their position the garrison of Montjuich might neglect proper precautions.

One morning before daybreak the earl, accompanied only by Jack and a native guide, left the camp on foot, having laid aside their uniforms and put on the attire of peasants, so that the glitter of their accoutrements might not attract the attention of the enemy's outposts. Making a long detour they approached the castle, and ascending one of the ravines gained a point where, themselves unseen, they could mark all particulars of the fortifications. Having carried out his purpose the earl returned to camp with his companion without his absence having been observed. The observations which Peterborough had made confirmed the reports of

the peasants, that the garrison kept but a negligent watch, and he at once resolved upon making the attempt; but to none of his most intimate friends did he give the slightest hint of his intentions.

To disguise his views he called councils of war both in the camp and fleet, wherein it was resolved, with his full consent, that the siege of Barcelona should be abandoned, and that the army should be immediately re-embarked and conveyed to Italy. Accordingly the heavy artillery was conveyed on board ship, the warlike stores collected, and the troops warned to be ready for embarkation. A storm of reproaches was poured upon the earl by Charles and his courtiers. The officers of the fleet protested openly, declaring that an assault ought to be attempted, and that it was too late in the season to attempt operations elsewhere.

To Jack's surprise his commander, usually so hasty, irritable, and passionate, bore with the greatest calmness and patience the reproaches and accusations to which he was exposed. No one dreamed that behind these preparations for embarkation any plan of attack was hidden.

On the 13th of September the army received orders to embark on the morrow, while within the town the garrison and the inhabitants, who were, or pretended to be, well affected to the Bourbons, held high rejoicing at the approaching departure.

On the afternoon of that day a detachment of English and Dutch troops 1200 strong were ordered to assemble in the allied camp for the purpose, as was supposed, of covering the embarkation,

Scaling ladders and everything necessary for an assault had already been privately prepared by the Catalan peasants under Peterborough's instructions.

About six o'clock in the evening 400 grenadiers of the party assembled under the command of Hon. Colonel Southwell, and were ordered to march by the Serria Road, as if *en route* to Tarragona to meet the fleet and embark in that harbour. The remainder of the detachment followed in support at some little distance. At nightfall the Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt was surprised by Lord Peterborough's entrance into his quarters. Since their rupture all intercourse had ceased between them.

"I have determined," the earl said, "to make this night an attack upon the enemy. You may now, if you please, be a judge of our behaviour, and see whether my officers and soldiers really deserve the bad character which you of late have so readily imputed to them." He then explained that the troops were already on their march to Montjuich.

The prince immediately ordered his horse, and the two gallant but impulsive and singular men rode off, followed only by Jack Stilwell and the prince's aide-de-camp. At ten o'clock they overtook the troops, and Peterborough ordered a total change of route, he himself leading.

The roads were winding, narrow, and difficult. For a great part of the way there was only room for the men to march in single file. The night

was very dark, and the detachment many hours on the march, so that daylight was just breaking when they reached the foot of the hill on which the fort of Montjuich stood.

The troops under Peterborough's command now perceived the object of their march, and imagined that they would be led to the attack before the day had fairly broke; but the general had well considered the subject, and had determined to avoid the risk and confusion of a night assault. He called his officers together and explained to them why he did not mean to attack till broad daylight.

His examination of the place had shown him that the ditches could be crossed, no palisades or barriers having been erected. He had noticed, too, that the inner works were not sufficiently high to enable their guns properly to command the outer works should these be carried by an enemy. He had therefore determined to carry the outworks by assault, judging that if he captured them the inner works could not long resist. In case of a reverse, or to enable him to take advantage of success, he told them that he had ordered Brigadier-general Stanhope to march during the night with a thousand infantry and the handful of cavalry to a convent lying halfway between the camp and the city, and there to hold himself in reserve.

Peterborough now silently and coolly completed his arrangements for the assault. He divided the body of troops into three parties; the first of these, two hundred and eighty strong, were to attack the

bastion facing the town, which was the strongest part of the defence. He himself and the Prince of Hesse accompanied this party. A lieutenant and thirty men formed the advance. A captain and fifty more were the support, and the remaining two hundred men were to form in the rear.

The orders were that they should push forward in spite of the enemy's fire, leap into the ditch, drive the garrison before them, and if possible enter the works with them; but, if not, to obtain at least a firm footing on the outer defences. The second party, similar in strength and formation, under the command of the Hon. Colonel Southwell, were to attack an unfinished demi-bastion on the extreme western point of the fort and furthest from the town. The remainder of the little force, under a Dutch colonel, were to be held in reserve, and to assist wherever they might be most useful. They occupied a position somewhat in rear, and halfway between the two parties who were to make the assault.

Soon after daylight Peterborough gave the order to advance, and in the highest spirits, and in excellent order, the soldiers pushed up the hill towards the fort. Some irregular Spanish troops were the first to perceive them. These fired a hasty volley at the British troops as they ascended the crest and then retreated into the fort. Seizing their arms the garrison rushed to the ramparts and manned them in time to receive the assailants with a sharp fire. The grenadiers who formed the leading party did not hesitate for a moment, but leaped into the un-

finished ditch, clambered up the outer rampart, and with pike and bayonet attacked the defenders.

The captain's detachment speedily joined them. The defenders gave way, broke, and fled, and in wild confusion both parties rushed into the bastion. Peterborough and the prince with their two hundred men followed them quickly and in perfect order, and were soon masters of the bastion. The earl at once set his men to work to throw up a breastwork to cover them from the guns of the inner works; and as there was plenty of materials collected just at this spot for the carrying out of some extensive repairs, they were able to put themselves under cover before the enemy opened fire upon them.

The attention of the garrison was wholly occupied by this sudden and unexpected attack, and the Prince della Torrella, a Neapolitan officer in temporary command of the fort, ordered all his force to oppose the assailants. This was what Peterborough had expected. He at once sent orders to Colonel Southwell to commence his attack upon the now almost undefended west bastion. The order was promptly obeyed. At the first rush the ditch was passed, the rampart gained, the outer walls scaled, and three guns taken without the loss of a man.

The defenders hastened at once to meet this new danger. They opened a heavy fire upon the British, and sallying out endeavoured to retake the outer rampart with the bayonet. A desperate contest ensued; but though many of the English officers and soldiers fell, they would not yield a

foot of the position they had captured. Colonel Southwell, a man of great personal strength and daring, was in the struggle three times surrounded by the enemy; but each time he cut his way out in safety.

The sally was at last repulsed, and the English entrenched their position and turned their captured guns against the fort. While both the assaulting columns were occupied in entrenching themselves there was a lull in the battle. The besieged could not venture to advance against either, as they would have been exposed to the fire of the other, and to the risk of a flank attack.

Peterborough exerted himself to the utmost. He ordered up the thousand men under General Stanhope and made prodigious exertions to get some guns and mortars into position upon the newly won ramparts.

Great was the consternation and astonishment in Barcelona when a loud roar of musketry broke out round the citadel, and Velasco, the governor, was thunderstruck to find himself threatened in this vital point by an enemy whose departure he had, the evening before, been celebrating. The assembly was sounded, and the church bells pealed out the alarm.

The troops ran to their places of assembly, the fortifications round the town were manned, and a body of four hundred mounted grenadiers under the Marquis de Risbourg hurried off to the succour of Montjuich. The earl had been sure that such a movement would be made. He could not spare

men from his own scanty force to guard the roads between the city and the castle, but he had posted a number of the armed Spanish peasants, who were in the pay of the army, in a narrow gorge, where, with hardly any risk to themselves, they might easily have prevented the horsemen from passing. The peasants, however, fired a hurried volley and then fled in all directions.

Lord Peterborough learnt a lesson here which he never forgot, namely, that these Spanish irregulars, useful as they might be in harassing an enemy or pursuing a beaten foe, were utterly untrustworthy in any plan of combined action. The succour, therefore, reached Montjuich in safety; two hundred of the men dismounted and entered the fort, the remainder, leading their horses, returned to Barcelona.

The Marquis de Risbourg had no sooner entered the fort and taken the command than he adopted a stratagem which nearly proved fatal to the English hopes of success. He ordered his men to shout, "Long live Charles the Third!" and threw open the gates of the fort as if to surrender. The Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt, who commanded at this point, was completely deceived, and he ordered Colonel Allen to advance with two hundred and fifty men, while he himself followed with a company in reserve, believing that the Spanish garrison had declared for King Charles.

The British advanced eagerly and in some disorder into the ditch, when a terrible fire of musketry was suddenly opened upon them from the front and flank. In vain they tried to defend themselves,

the brave prince was struck down by a mortal wound while endeavouring to encourage them, and was carried to the rear, and Allen and two hundred men were taken prisoners. The prince expired a few minutes later before there was time for a doctor to examine his wound.

Peterborough, who had come up just at the end of the struggle, remained with him till he died, and then hurried off to retrieve the fortune of the day, which, during these few minutes, had greatly changed. Velasco had despatched three thousand men, as fast as they could be got together, to follow Risbourg's dragoons to the succour of the fort, and these were already in sight. But this was not all. One of the strange panics which occasionally attack even the best troops had seized the British in the bastion.

Without any apparent cause, without a shot being fired at them from the fort, they fell into confusion. Their commander, Lord Charlemont, shared the panic, and gave orders for a retreat. The march soon became a rout, and the men fled in confusion from the position which they had just before so bravely won.

Captain Carleton, a staff officer, disengaged himself from the throng of fugitives and rode off to inform the earl, who was reconnoitring the approaching Spaniards, of what had taken place. Peterborough at once turned his horse, and, followed by Carleton and Jack Stilwell, galloped up the hill. He drew his sword and threw away the scabbard as he met the troops, already halfway

down the hill, and, dismounting, shouted to them:

"I am sure all brave men will follow me. Will you bear the infamy of having deserted your post and forsaken your general?"

The appeal was not in vain. Ashamed of their late panic the fugitives halted, faced about, and pressed after him up the hill, and, on reaching the top, found that, strangely enough, the garrison had not discovered that the bastion had been abandoned, for in their retreat the English were hidden from the sight of those in the inner works.

The Marquis de Risbourg, instead of following up his advantage, had at once left Montjuich at the side near the city, taking Colonel Allen and the prisoners with him, and pushed on towards Barcelona. Halfway down he met the reinforcement of three thousand men. The prisoners, on being questioned, informed the Spanish commander that Lord Peterborough and the Prince of Hesse led the attack in person.

Thereupon the officer commanding the reinforcements concluded that the whole of the allied army was round the castle, and that he would be risking destruction if he pushed on. He therefore turned and marched back to the city. Had he continued his way Peterborough's force must have been destroyed, as Stanhope had not yet come up, and he had with him only the little force with which he had marched out from camp, of whom more than a fourth were already captured or slain. Such are the circumstances upon which the fate of battles and campaigns depend.

CHAPTER VIII

A Tumult in the City

As the Spanish column retired to Barcelona under the idea that the whole English army was on the hill, the Miquelets, as the armed bands of peasants were called, swarmed down from the hills. Incapable of withstanding an attack by even a small force, they were in their element in harassing a large one in retreat. Halfway between Montjuich and the town was the small fort of San Bertram. The garrison, seeing the column in retreat towards the town, pursued by the insurgent peasantry, feared that they themselves would be cut off, and so abandoned their post and joined the retreat.

The peasants at once took possession of San Bertram, where there were five light guns. As soon as the news reached Peterborough he called together two hundred men and led them down to the little fort. Ropes were fastened to the guns, and with forty men to each gun these were quickly run up the hill and placed in position in the captured bastions. So quickly was this done that in less than an hour from the abandonment of San Bertram by the Spanish the guns had opened fire upon Montjuich.

While the troops worked these five guns and the three captured in Southwell's first attack Jack Stilwell was sent off on horseback at full speed with an order for the landing of the heavy guns and mortars from the fleet. The news of the attack on Montjuich, and the retreat of the Spanish column, spread with rapidity through the country, and swarms of armed peasants flocked in. These the earl dispersed among the ravines and groves round the city, so as to prevent any parties from coming out to ascertain what was going on round Montjuich, and to mask the movements of the besiegers.

Velasco appeared paralysed by the energy and daring of his opponent, and, although he had in hand a force equal if not superior to that which Peterborough could dispose of, he allowed two days to pass without attempting to relieve Montjuich. In those two days wonders had been performed by the soldiers and sailors, who toiled unweariedly in dragging the heavy guns from the landing place to the hill of Montjuich. The light cannon of the besiegers had had but little effect upon the massive walls of the fortress, and the Prince Caraccioli held out for two days even against the heavier metal of the mortars and siege guns that were quickly brought to bear upon him.

On the 17th, however, Colonel Southwell by a well-aimed shot brought the siege to a close. He noticed that a small chapel within the fort appeared to be specially guarded by the besieged, and ordered a Dutch sergeant of artillery, who was working a

heavy mortar, to try to drop a shell upon it. The artilleryman made several attempts, but each time missed the mark. Colonel Southwell then undertook the management of the gun himself, and soon succeeded in dropping a shell upon the roof of the building, which proved, as he had suspected, to be in use as a magazine. There was a tremendous explosion, the chapel was shattered into fragments, Caraccioli and three other officers were killed, and a great breach was blown in the main rampart.

A loud cheer broke from the besiegers, and Colonel Southwell at once put himself at the head of the men in the trenches and advanced to storm the breach before the enemy could recover from their confusion. The disastrous effects of the explosion had, however, scared all idea of further resistance out of the minds of the defenders, who at once rushed out of the works and called out that they surrendered, the senior surviving officer and his companions delivering up their swords to Colonel Southwell, and begging that protection might at once be given to their soldiers from the Miquelets, whose ferocity was as notorious then as it was a hundred years afterwards.

Peterborough appointed Colonel Southwell governor of Montjuich, and at once turned his attention to the city. The brilliant result of the attack on the citadel had silenced all murmurs and completely restored Lord Peterborough's authority. Soldiers and sailors vied with each other in their exertions to get the guns into position, and the Miquelets, largely increased in number, became

for once orderly and active, and laboured steadily in the trenches.

The main army conducted the attack from the side at which it had been originally commenced, while General Stanhope, his force considerably increased by troops from the main body, conducted the attack from the side of Montjuich. Four batteries of heavy guns and two of mortars soon opened fire upon the city, while the smaller vessels of the fleet moved close in to the shore and threw shot and shell into the town.

A breach was soon effected in the rampart, and Velasco was summoned to surrender; but he refused to do so, although his position had become almost desperate. The disaffection of the inhabitants was now openly shown. The soldiers had lost confidence and heart, and the loyalty of many of them was more than doubtful. The governor arrested many of the mutinous soldiers and hostile citizens, and turned numbers of them out of the city.

On the 3rd of October the English engineers declared the breach on the side of Montjuich to be practicable, and Peterborough himself wrote to the governor offering honourable terms of capitulation, but declaring that if these were rejected he would not renew his offer.

Velasco again refused. He had erected a formidable entrenchment within the breach, and had sunk two mines beneath the ruins in readiness to blow the assailing columns into the air.

The guns again opened fire, and in a very short time a Dutch artillery officer threw two shells upon

the entrenchment and almost destroyed it, while a third fell on the breach itself, and crashing through the rubbish fired Velasco's two mines and greatly enlarged the breach. The earl could now have carried the town by storm had he chosen, but with his usual magnanimity to the vanquished he again wrote to Velasco and summoned him to surrender.

The governor had now no hope of a successful resistance, and he therefore agreed to surrender in four days should no relief arrive. The terms agreed upon were that the garrison should march out with all the honours of war, and should be transported by sea to San Felix, and escorted thence to Gerona; but as a few hours later the news arrived that Gerona had declared for King Charles, Velasco requested to be conveyed to Rosas instead. The capitulation was signed on the 9th of October, and the garrison were preparing to march out on the 14th, when, in the English camp, the sound of a tumult in the city was heard.

"Quick, Stilwell!" the earl cried, running out of his tent, "to horse! The rascals inside are breaking out into a riot, and there will be a massacre unless I can put a stop to it."

The earl leapt on to his horse, called a few orderly dragoons who were at hand to accompany him, and ordered that four companies of grenadiers should follow as quickly as possible.

Galloping at full speed Peterborough soon arrived at the gate of San Angelo, and ordered the Spanish guard to open it. This they did without hesitation, and followed by his little party he rode into the city.

All was uproar and confusion. The repressive measures which the governor had been obliged to take against the disaffected had added to the Catalan hatred of the French, and the Austrian party determined to have vengeance upon the governor. A report was circulated that he intended to carry away with him a number of the principal inhabitants in spite of the articles of capitulation. This at once stirred up the people to fury, and they assailed and plundered the houses of the French and of the known partisans of the Duke d'Anjou.

They then turned upon the governor and garrison. The latter dispersed through the city, and unprepared for attack, would speedily have been massacred had not their late enemy been at hand to save them. Peterborough, with his little party of dragoons, rode through the streets exhorting, entreating, and commanding the rioters to abstain. When, as in some cases, the mob refused to listen to him, and continued their work, the dragoons belaboured them heartily with the flats of their swords; and the surprise caused by seeing the British uniforms in their midst, and their ignorance of how many of the British had entered, did more even than the efforts of the dragoons to allay the tumult. Many ladies of quality had taken refuge in the convent, and Peterborough at once placed a guard over this.

Dashing from street to street, unattended even by his dragoons, Peterborough came upon a lady and gentleman struggling with the mob, who were

about to ill treat them. He charged into the thick of the tumult.

His hat had been lost in the fray, and the mob, not recognizing the strange figure as the redoubted English general, resisted, and one discharged a musket at him at a distance of a few feet, but the ball passed through his periwig without touching the head under it.

Fortunately two or three of his dragoons now rode up, and he was able to carry the lady and gentleman to their house hard by, when, to his satisfaction, he found that the gentleman he had saved was the Duke of Popoli, and the lady his wife, celebrated as one of the most beautiful women in Europe.

Jack Stilwell had soon after they entered the town become separated from his general. Seeing a mob gathered before a house in a side street, and hearing screams, he turned off and rode into the middle of the crowd. Spurring his horse and making him rear, he made his way through them to the door, and then leaping off, drawing as he did so a pistol from his holster, he ran upstairs.

It was a large and handsomely-furnished house. On the first floor was a great corridor. A number of men were gathered round a doorway. Within he heard the clashing of steel and the shouts of men in conflict. Bursting his way in through the doorway he entered the room.

In a corner, at the farthest end, crouched a lady holding a little boy in her arms. Before her stood a Spanish gentleman, sword in hand. A servant,

also armed, stood by him. They were hard pressed, for six or eight men with swords and pikes were cutting and thrusting at them. Three servants lay dead upon the ground, and seven or eight of the townspeople were also lying dead or wounded. Jack rushed forward, and with his pistol shot the man who appeared to be the leader of the assailants, and then, drawing his sword, placed himself before the gentleman and shouted to the men to lay down their arms. The latter, astounded at the appearance of an English officer, drew back. Seeing he was alone, they would, however, have renewed the attack, but Jack ran to the window and opened it, and shouted as if to some soldiers below.

The effect was instantaneous. The men dropped upon their knees, and throwing down their arms begged for mercy. Jack signified that he granted it, and motioned to them to carry off their dead and wounded comrades. Some of the men in the corridor came in to aid them in so doing. Jack, sword in hand, accompanied them to the door, and saw them out of the house. Then he told a boy to hold his horse, and closing the door returned upstairs. He found the gentleman sitting on a chair exhausted, while his wife, crying partly from relief, partly from anxiety, was endeavouring to stanch the blood which flowed from several wounds.

Jack at once aided her in the task, and signed to the servant to bring something to drink. The man ran to a buffet and produced some cordials. Jack filled a glass and placed it at the lips of the

wounded man, who, after drinking it, gradually recovered his strength.

"My name, sir," he said, "is Count Julian de Minas, and I owe you my life and that of my wife and child. To whom am I indebted so much?"

Jack did not, of course, understand his words, but the title caught his ear, and he guessed that the Spaniard was introducing himself.

"My name is Stilwell," Jack said; "I am one of General Peterborough's aides-de-camp. I am very glad to be of assistance; and now, seeing you are so far recovered, I must leave you, for there is much to do in the town, and the general has entered with only a few troops. I think you need not fear any return on the part of these ruffians. The English troops will enter the town in the course of a few hours."

So saying Jack immediately hurried away, and mounting his horse rode off to find the general.

The news that Lord Peterborough and the English had entered spread rapidly through the city, and the rioters, fearing to excite the wrath of the man who in a few hours would be master of the town, scattered to their homes, and when all was quiet Peterborough again rode off to the camp with his troops and there waited quietly until the hour appointed for the capitulation. The Spanish then marched out, and the earl entered with a portion of his troops.

He at once issued a proclamation that if any person had any lawful grievances against the late governor they should go to the town house and

lay them in proper form, and that he would see that justice was done. An hour later some of the principal inhabitants waited upon him, and asked which churches he desired to have for the exercise of his religion. He replied:

“Wherever I have my quarters I shall have conveniency enough to worship God, and as for the army they will strictly follow the rules of war, and perform divine service among themselves without giving any offence to anyone.”

This answer gave great satisfaction to the people, as the French had spread a report among them that the Protestants, if they captured the town, would take their churches from them.

In the evening the earl gave a great banquet, at which he entertained all the people of distinction of both parties, and his courtesy and affability at once won for him the confidence of all with whom he came in contact. The next day the shops were all opened, the markets filled, and there were no signs that the tranquillity of Barcelona had ever been disturbed. Soon after breakfast Jack, who was quartered in the governor's palace with the general, was informed that a gentleman wished to speak to him, and the Count de Minas was shown in.

He took Jack's hand and bowed profoundly. As conversation was impossible Jack told his orderly to fetch one of the interpreters attached to the general.

“I tried to come last night,” the count said, “but I found that I was too weak to venture out

I could not understand what you said when you went away so suddenly, but I guessed that it was the call of duty. I did not know your name, but enquiring this morning who were the officers that entered with the general yesterday, I was told that his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Stilwell, was alone with him. That is how I found you. And now, let me again thank you for the immense service you have rendered me and my wife and child. Remember, henceforth the life of the Count de Minas and all that he possesses is at your service."

When the interpreter had translated this, Jack said in some confusion, "I am very glad, count, to have been of service to you. It was a piece of good fortune, indeed, on my part that I happened so providentially to ride along at the right moment. I was about this morning to do myself the honour of calling to enquire how the countess and yourself were after the terrible scene of yesterday."

"The countess prayed me to bring you round to her," the count said. "Will you do me the honour of accompanying me now?"

Jack at once assented, and, followed by the interpreter, proceeded with the count to his house. The room into which the count led him was not that in which the fray had taken place the day before. The countess rose as they entered, and Jack saw that, though still pale and shaken by the events of the previous day, she was a singularly beautiful woman.

"Ah, señor," she said, advancing to meet him, and taking his hand and laying it against her

heart, "how can I thank you for the lives of my husband and my boy! One more minute and you would have arrived too late. It seemed to me as if heaven had opened and an angel had come to our aid when you entered."

Jack coloured up hotly as the interpreter translated the words. If he had expressed his thoughts he would have said, "Please, don't make any more fuss about it;" but he found that Spanish courtesy required much more than this, so he answered:

"Countess, the moment was equally fortunate to me, and I shall ever feel grateful that I have been permitted to be of service to so beautiful a lady."

The countess smiled as Jack's words were translated.

"I did not know that you English were flatterers," she said. "They told us that you were uncouth islanders, but I see that they have calumniated you."

"I hope some day," Jack said, "that I shall be able to talk to you without the aid of an interpreter. It is very difficult to speak when every word has to be translated."

For a quarter of an hour the conversation was continued, the count and countess asking questions about England. At the end of that time Jack thought he might venture to take his leave. The count accompanied him to the door, and begged him to consider his house as his own, and then with many bows on each side Jack made his way into the street.

“Confound all this Spanish politeness!” he muttered to himself; “it’s very grand and stately, I have no doubt, but it’s a horrible nuisance; and as to talking through an interpreter it’s like repeating lessons, only worse. I should like to see a man making a joke through an interpreter, and waiting to see how it told. I must get up a little Spanish as soon as possible. The earl has picked up a lot already, and there will be no fun to be had here in Spain unless one can make one’s self understood.”

The next day there were rumours current that the population were determined to take vengeance upon Velasco. The earl marched eight hundred men into the town, placed the governor in their centre and escorted him to the shore, and so took him safely on board a ship. He was conveyed, by his own desire, to Alicante, as the revolt had spread so rapidly through Catalonia that Rosas was now the only town which favoured the cause of the Duke d’Anjou.

The capture of Barcelona takes its place as one of the most brilliant feats in military history, and reflects extraordinary credit upon its general, who exhibited at once profound prudence, faithful adherence to his sovereign’s orders, patience, and self-command under the ill-concealed hatred of many of those with whom he had to co-operate—the wrong-headedness of the king, the insolence of the German courtiers, the supineness of the Dutch, the jealousy of his own officers, and the open discontent of the army and navy—and a

secrecy marvellously kept up for many weary and apparently hopeless days.

On the 28th of October King Charles made his public entry into Barcelona, and for some days the city was the scene of continual fêtes. The whole province rose in his favour, and the gentlemen of the district poured into the town to offer their homage to the king. Only about one thousand men of the Spanish garrison had to be conveyed to Rosas in accordance with the terms of capitulation, the rest of the troops taking the oath of allegiance to King Charles and being incorporated with the allied army.

Jack Stilwell entered into the festivities with the enjoyment of youth. The officers of the allied army were made much of by the inhabitants, and Jack, as one of the general's aides-de-camp, was invited to every fête and festivity. The Count de Minas introduced him to many of the leading nobles of the city as the preserver of his life; but his inability to speak the language deprived him of much of the pleasure which he would otherwise have obtained, and, like many of the other officers, he set to work in earnest to acquire some knowledge of it. In one of the convents were some Scottish monks, and for three or four hours every morning Jack worked regularly with one of them.

Although Lord Peterborough threw himself heart and soul into the festivities, he worked with equal ardour at the military preparations. But here, as before, his plans for energetic action were thwarted by the Germans and Dutch. At last, however, his

energy, aided by the active spirit of the king, prevailed, and preparations were made for the continuance of the campaign. The season was so late that no further operations could be undertaken by sea, and the allied fleet therefore sailed for England and Holland, leaving four English and two Dutch frigates in support of the land forces at Barcelona.

Garrisons of regular troops were despatched to the various towns which had either declared for the king or had been captured by the Miquelets headed by the Marquis of Cifuentes, engineer officers being also sent to put them in a state of defence. Of these Tortosa was, from its position, the most important, as it commanded the bridge of boats on the Ebro, the main communication between Aragon and Valencia. To this town two hundred dragoons and one thousand foot were sent under Colonel Hans Hamilton. The king turned his attention to the organization of the Spanish army. He formed a regiment of five hundred dragoons for his bodyguard, mounting them upon the horses of the former garrison, while from these troops, swelled by levies from the province, he raised six powerful battalions of infantry. He excited, however, a very unfavourable feeling among the Spaniards by bestowing all the chief commands in these corps upon his German followers.

But while the conquest of Barcelona had brought the whole of Catalonia to his side, the cause of King Charles was in other parts of Spain less flourishing. Lord Galway and General Fagel had been beaten by Marshal Tessé before Badajos, and the allied

army had retreated into Portugal, leaving the French and Spanish adherents of Philip free to turn their whole attention against the allies in Catalonia.

Weary weeks passed on before Lord Peterborough could overcome the apathy and obstinacy of the Germans and Dutch. At a council of war held on the 30th of December Peterborough proposed to divide the army, that he in person would lead half of it to aid the insurrection which had broken out in Valencia, and that the other half should march into Aragon; but Brigadier-general Conyngham and the Dutch general Schratenbach strongly opposed this bold council, urging that the troops required repose after their labours, and that their numbers were hardly sufficient to guard the province they had won. Such arguments drove Peterborough almost to madness; the troops had, in fact, gone through no hard work during the siege of Barcelona, and two months and a half had elapsed since that city surrendered. Moreover, far from being reinvigorated from rest, they were suffering from illness caused by inactivity in an unhealthy country.

Already all the benefits derivable from the gallant capture of Barcelona had been lost. The enemy had recovered from the surprise and dismay excited by that event. The friendly and wavering, who would at once have risen had the king boldly advanced after his striking success, had already lost heart and become dispirited by the want of energy displayed in his after proceedings, and

from all parts of Spain masses of troops were moving to crush the allies and stamp out the insurrection.

In Valencia only had the partisans of Charles gained considerable advantages. In the beginning of December Colonel Nebot, commanding a regiment of Philip's dragoons, declared for Charles, and, accompanied by four hundred of his men, entered the town of Denia, where the people, and Basset the governor, at once declared for Charles.

On the 11th Nebot and Basset attacked the little town of Xabea, garrisoned by five hundred Biscayans, and carried it, and the same night took Oliva and Gandia. The next day they pushed on through Alzira, where they were joined by many of the principal inhabitants, and a detachment of the dragoons under Nebot's brother, Alexander, surprised and routed three troops of the enemy's horse, captured their convoy of ammunition, and pursued them to the very gates of Valencia.

On the night of the 15th the main body marched from Alzira, and appeared next morning before Valencia and summoned the town to surrender. The Marquis de Villa Garcia refused, but Alexander Nebot put himself at the head of his dragoons and galloped up to the gates shouting, "Long live the king!" The inhabitants overpowered the guard at the gate and threw it open, and Valencia was taken. When the news of these reverses reached Madrid the Conde de las Torres, a veteran officer who had seen much service in the wars of Italy,

marched from Madrid in all haste to prevent if possible the junction of the forces of Catalonia with the Valencians.

He at once marched upon San Matteo, which lay on the main line of communication, and commenced a vigorous siege of that city. The king received the news on the 18th of January, 1706, and wrote at once to Peterborough, urging him to go to the relief of San Matteo, but giving him no troops whatever to assist him in his enterprise; and Peterborough's difficulties were increased by General Conyngham, who commanded a brigade at Fraga, hastily falling back upon Lerida, upon hearing exaggerated rumours of the strength of the enemy.

Peterborough, however, did not hesitate a moment, but mounting his horse, and accompanied only by his aides-de-camp, Jack Stilwell and Lieutenant Graham, rode for Tortosa. Changing his horse at the various towns through which he passed, and riding almost night and day, he reached Tortosa on the 4th, and at once summoned the magistrates of the town to give information as to the real state of things. He then found, to his astonishment, that the details which the king had sent him respecting the force of the enemy were entirely incorrect. Charles had written that they were 2000 strong, and that 16,000 peasants were in arms against them, whereas Las Torres had with him 7000 good troops, and not a single peasant had taken up arms.

General Killigrew, who now commanded the two hundred dragoons and the thousand British infantry

at Tortosa, together with his officers, considered that under such circumstances it was absolutely hopeless to attempt any movement for the relief of San Matteo; but Peterborough did not hesitate a moment, and only said to his officers:

“Unless I can raise that siege our affairs are desperate, and therefore capable only of desperate remedies. Be content, let me try my fortune, whether I cannot by diligence and surprise effect that which by downright force is impracticable.”

The officers had unbounded confidence in their general, and although the enterprise appeared absolutely hopeless, they at once agreed to undertake it. Accordingly the three weak English regiments marched from Tortosa under Killigrew, and the next day the earl followed with the dragoons and a party of Miquelets, and overtook the infantry that night. The next morning he broke up his little army into small detachments in order that they might march more rapidly, and, dividing the Miquelets among them as guides, ordered them to assemble at Fraiguesa, two leagues from San Matteo.

The advance was admirably managed. Small parties of dragoons and Miquelets went on ahead along each of the roads to occupy the passes among the hills. When arrived at these points they had strict orders to let no one pass them until the troops appeared in sight, when the advance again pushed forward and secured another position for the same purpose.

Thus no indication of his coming preceded him,

and the troops arriving together with admirable punctuality before Fraiguesa, the place was taken by surprise, and guards were at once mounted on its gates, with orders to prevent anyone from leaving the town on any excuse whatever. Thus while the English force were within two leagues of San Matteo, Las Torres remained in absolute ignorance that any hostile force was advancing against him. Graham and Jack were nearly worn out by the exertions which they had undergone with their indefatigable general. They had ridden for three days and nights almost without sleep, and on their arrival at Tortosa were engaged unceasingly in carrying out their chief's instructions, in making preparations for the advance, and in obtaining every possible information as to the country to be traversed.

Both the young officers had now begun to speak Spanish. A residence of four months in the country, constant communication with the natives, and two months and a half steady work with an instructor, had enabled them to make great progress, and they were now able to communicate without difficulty with the Spaniards with whom they came in contact.

CHAPTER IX

The Advance into Valencia

THE Earl of Peterborough had not satisfied himself with depriving the enemy of all information as to his advance. He took steps to confuse and alarm them by false news. By means of large bribes he prevailed upon two peasants to carry each a copy of the same letter to Colonel Jones, who commanded in San Matteo. He took the further step of ensuring their loyalty by arresting their families as hostages, and, moreover, took care that they should know nothing as to the real state of things that they could report if treacherously inclined.

He arranged that one of them should go in first, and, passing through the besiegers' lines, should arouse their suspicions, and should then, when arrested, give up the letter concealed upon him, and should also betray the route by which his companion was endeavouring to reach the city, so that the second messenger would also be captured and his letter be taken. The letters were as follows:—

“To Colonel Jones.—You will hardly believe yourself what this letter informs you of, if it come safe to you; and though I have taken the best precaution, it will do little prejudice if it falls into the

enemy's hands, since they shall see and feel my troops almost as soon as they can receive intelligence, should it be betrayed to them. The end for which I venture it to you is, that you may prepare to open the furthest gate towards Valencia, and have four thousand Miquelets ready, who will have the employment they love, and are fit for, the pursuing and pillaging a flying enemy. The country is as one can wish for their entire destruction. Be sure, upon the first appearance of our troops and the first discharge of our artillery, you answer with an English halloo, and take to the mountains or the heights with all your men. The Conde de las Torres must take the plains, the hills on the left being almost impassable, and secured by five or six thousand of the country people. But what will gall him most will be, the whole regiment of Nebot, which revolted to us near Valencia, is likewise amongst us.

“I was, eight days ago, myself in Barcelona, and I believe the Conde de las Torres must have so good intelligence from thence that he cannot be ignorant of it. What belongs to my own troops and my own resolutions I can easily keep from them, though nothing else. You know the force I have, and the multitudes that are gathering from all parts against us, so I am forced to put the whole into this action, which must be decided to give any hopes to our desperate game. By nine or ten, within an hour after you can receive this, you will discover us on the tops of the hills, not two cannon shot from their camp.

“The advantages of the sea are inconceivable, and have contributed to bring about what you could never expect to see, a force almost equal to the enemy in number, and you know that less would do our business. Besides, never men were so transported as to be brought in such secrecy so near an enemy. I have near six thousand men locked up this night within the walls of Traguera. I do not expect you will believe it till you see them.

“You know we had a thousand foot and two hundred dragoons in Tortosa. Wills and a thousand foot English and Dutch came down the Ebro in boats, and I embarked a thousand more at Taragona when I landed at Viñaroz, and the artillery from thence I brought in country carts. It was easy to assemble the horse. Zinzendorf and Moras are as good as our own, and with our English dragoons make up in all near two thousand. But the whole depends upon leaving them a retreat without interruption.

“Dear Jones, prove a good dragoon, be diligent and alert, and preach the welcome doctrine to your Miquelets, plunder without danger.—Your friend, PETERBOROUGH.”

The two letters fell into the hands of Las Torres, and so artfully had the capture been contrived, that it never occurred to him to doubt the truth of these mendacious documents. Orders were instantly given to prepare for a march, and almost at the same time two events occurred in the siege works which caused confusion of the troops. Several

mines had been unskilfully sunk and charged; one of these prematurely exploded and destroyed forty of the workmen. The remaining mines Colonel Jones contrived to swamp by turning the course of a brook into them, thus rendering them harmless. While the troops were confused with these disasters, the news of the contents of the intercepted letters spread through the camp, causing a general panic; and almost immediately afterwards the advance guard of Peterborough's force were seen, according to the promise contained in the letters, on the crests of the hills.

By able management the twelve hundred men were made to appear vastly more numerous than they were. The dragoons showed in various parties at different points of the hilltops, and, after pausing as if to reconnoitre the camp, galloped back again as if to carry information to a main body behind; while the infantry availed themselves of the wooded and uneven ground to conceal their weakness. It seemed, indeed, to the enemy that the tops of all the hills and the avenues of approach were covered by advancing columns. Las Torres, unsuspecting of stratagem, was now convinced that his position was one of extreme danger, while confusion reigned in the camp. The tents were hastily struck, the guns spiked, and in a few minutes the Spanish army started along the Valencia road in a retreat which might almost be called a flight.

Colonel Jones, seeing the confusion that reigned, instantly sallied from the town with his whole force in pursuit, and followed Las Torres for nearly two

leagues to Peñasol, inflicting a loss of nearly three hundred men upon the Spaniards; while Peterborough on the other side marched his force through the abandoned entrenchments into the town. Scarcely halting, however, he made a show of pursuit as far as Albocazer, but always keeping to the hills with such caution that in case the enemy should learn his weakness, his retreat would still be secured. While on the march a courier overtook him with two despatches—the one from King Charles, the other from the English resident with the court at Barcelona.

The king told him that he would be obliged to countermand the reinforcements he had promised him for the relief of San Matteo, in consequence of the unfavourable state of affairs elsewhere. It, however, conveyed to Peterborough something which he valued more than reinforcements, namely, full power to act in accordance with his own discretion. The despatch from the British resident told him that news had come that the Duke of Berwick, with the main army of France, freed by the retreat of Lord Galway from all trouble on the western side of Spain, was in full march for Catalonia.

The Prince of Serclaes, with 4000 men, watched the small garrison at Lerida; the Duke of Noailles, with 8000 French troops from Roussillon, threatened Catalonia on a third side; while Philip and Marshal Tessé had collected 10,000 men at Madrid. The letter concluded with the words: "There is nothing here but distrust, discontent, and despair."

The responsibility left by the king's letter upon

Peterborough was great indeed. On the one hand, if he did not return to the defence of Catalonia, the king might be exposed to imminent danger; and, on the other, if he repassed the Ebro he might be accused of having left Valencia and its loyal inhabitants to their fate, and would have forfeited all the advantages that his audacity and skill had already gained.

His difficulties in any case were enormous. His infantry were marching almost barefooted; they were clothed in rags. The season was inclement, the country mountainous and rough, and the horses of the dragoons so exhausted that they could scarcely carry their riders. In obedience to his instructions, here, as at Tortosa, he assembled his officers in a council of war and asked their opinion. They were unanimous in saying that, with the small and exhausted force under his orders, no further operation could be undertaken for the conquest of Valencia, but that the little army should post itself in such a position as might afford the greatest facility for protecting the king.

Peterborough had thus on one side not only the difficulty of the position, but the opinion of the council of war against a further advance; but on the other hand he knew the anxiety of the king that help should be given to the Valencians. He therefore announced to his officers a resolution as desperate as that ever formed by a sane man. He had listened gravely and in silence while the officers gave their opinion, and then ordered that the foot-sore infantry, with a few of the horse, should march

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back to Viñaroz, a little town on the seaside a day's journey from Tortosa, where in case of necessity they might embark in boats and be taken off to the ships. Then, to the stupefaction of his officers, he announced his intention of himself proceeding with the remaining dragoons, about a hundred and fifty in number, to conquer the province of Valencia!

In vain the officers remonstrated, the earl was firm. The council then broke up, and the troops prepared for their march in opposite directions. The parting of Peterborough and his officers was very sad, for they doubted not that it was a final one.

"I will yet endeavour," he said, "however our circumstances seem desperate, to secure the kingdom of Valencia; and since the king has thought conquest possible in this present case, he cannot complain of my motions, however rash they might appear. I am resolved, therefore, never to repass the Ebro without positive orders from him."

Before starting the earl wrote to Charles and explained fully his intentions. It is evident from the tone of his letter that Peterborough did not expect to survive this extraordinary expedition. The language is grave and firm, and, though respectful, full of stronger remonstrance and more homely advice than often reaches kings. It concluded:

"I have had but little share in your councils. If our advance had been approved, if your majesty had trusted us . . . if your majesty had permitted me to march into the kingdom of Valencia, when I so earnestly desired it, without making me stay

under pretence of the march of imaginary troops; if your majesty would have believed me on that occasion, your majesty would have had this time not only a viceroy of Valencia but the kingdom. With what force I have I am going to march straight to Valencia. I can take no other measures, leaving the rest to Providence. . . . If the time lost (so much against my inclination) exposes me to a sacrifice, at least I will perish with honour, and as a man deserving a better fate. PETERBOROUGH.—Alcala, 27th of January, 1706."

The earl now again sent orders to one thousand Spanish foot and three hundred horse, which had before been nominally placed at his disposal, but had never moved from the town in which they were garrisoned, to follow him into Valencia; and at the same time he wrote to Colonel Wills to march immediately with a like number of English horse and foot to his assistance.

The king, on the receipt of Peterborough's letter, issued positive and peremptory orders that the Spanish troops were at once to be set in motion. Colonel Wills wrote in reply that an important action had taken place at San Esteban de Litera on the 26th and 27th of January, between General Conyngham with his brigade and the Chevalier d'Asfeldt, in which, after a bloody contest, the French were driven from the field with a heavy loss of killed, wounded, and prisoners. The allies had also suffered serious loss, and General Conyngham had received a mortal wound. The command, therefore, had devolved upon himself.

Having seen the infantry march off, Peterborough, attended only by his two aides-de-camp, took his place at the head of his handful of cavalry and proceeded on his desperate enterprise—an enterprise the most extraordinary that has ever taken place between enemies of an equal degree of civilization. It was a war of a general with a small escort, but literally without an army, against able officers with thousands of disciplined troops and numerous defensible towns and positions, against enormous difficulties of country, against want and fatigue in every shape, and above all, against hope itself. And yet no one who had witnessed that little body march off would have supposed that they were entering upon what seemed an impossible expedition—an expedition from which none could come back alive. Worn out and sorry as was the appearance of the horses, ragged and dirty that of their riders, the latter were in high spirits. The contagion of the extraordinary energy and audacity of their chief had spread among them; they had an absolute confidence in his genius; and they entered upon the romantic enterprise with the ardour of schoolboys.

Not less was the spirit of the two young aides-de-camp. Before starting the earl had offered them the option of marching away with the infantry.

“It is not that I doubt your courage, lads, for I marked you both under fire at Montjuich, but the fatigues will be terrible. You have already supported, in a manner which has surprised me, the work which you have undergone. You have al-

ready borne far more than your full share of the hardships of the campaign, and I have, in my despatches, expressed a very strong opinion to the government as to the value of the services you have rendered. You are both very young, and I should be sorry to see your lives sacrificed in such an enterprise as that I am undertaking, and shall think no less of you if you elect now to have a period of rest."

The young men had, however, so firmly and emphatically declined to leave him that the earl accepted their continued service.

The cavalry, instead of keeping in a compact body, were broken up into parties of ten, all of whom followed different roads, spreading, through every hamlet they passed, the news that a great army, of which they were the forerunners, was following hotly behind. So that, should any peasants favourable to Philip's cause, carry the news to Las Torres, that general would be forced to believe that he was being pursued by a veritable army. Many stragglers of the retreating force were picked up and handed over to the peasantry to be sent as prisoners into Catalonia.

For the most part the little parties of cavalry were well received by the populace; the majority of the Valencians were in favour of King Charles, and that night, when they halted, the weary horses obtained ample supplies of grain and forage, and the troopers were made welcome to the best the villages afforded.

A few extra horses were purchased by Peter-

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borough during the day, and it was well for his aides-de-camp that it was so, for scarcely had they finished their meal than Peterborough ordered them again into the saddle. They were to ride by cross roads right and left to the villages where the different detachments had been ordered to halt, and to tell them the routes marked out for them by which they would again concentrate at midday, so as to ride in comparatively strong force through a small town on the main road, whence news might, not improbably, be sent on to Las Torres. After that they were to again disperse and pervade the country.

Jack and Graham carried out these orders, taking guides from each village through which they passed to the next, and it was near midnight before they had finished their work. At four in the morning every detachment was in motion, and at noon the troop was again concentrated. Here the earl learned that a detachment of the enemy had remained behind at Alcala, and, instead of carrying out his previous plan, he rode straight with the whole of his dragoons to that town. When he approached it he divided his force into three bodies, which entered the place simultaneously by different gates, and the Spanish detachment, two hundred strong, at once laid down their arms.

Evening was now approaching, and, as the horses and dragoons were utterly worn out, Peterborough halted for the night. He at once called together the principal inhabitants, and informed them that he required all the horses in the town, with such

saddlery as they could obtain, to be collected and forwarded for his use to a point he named.

The next morning the march was continued. Las Torres had continued his flight, and this was hastened when he heard of the capture of Alcala. He pushed through the town of Borriol and hastened on to Villa-Real, a town strongly favourable to King Charles. It opened its gates, however, on the solemn promise of Las Torres to respect the life and property of the inhabitants; but no sooner had his troops entered than he gave the order for a general massacre and the sack of the town. This ferocious order was executed, and very few of the inhabitants escaped with their lives.

The following day, on the news coming in from various points in his rear that the enemy were pressing after him, he marched his dispirited army to Nules, where the inhabitants were well affected. In answer to his appeal a thousand of the citizens enrolled themselves and undertook to defend the town till the last against the English. Having assured himself of their earnestness Las Torres inspected the muster, and having viewed all the dispositions for defence, continued his flight. Nules was fortified by strong walls flanked with towers, the fortifications were in an excellent state of defence, and the town could have resisted a siege by a considerable army.

On arriving at Villa-Real the British were horrified at the hideous massacre which had taken place. They went from house to house and found everywhere the bodies of the slaughtered inhabitants,

and the ardour of the dragoons was, if possible, heightened by the sight. They made but a short stay here and then galloped on to Nules. As they neared the town a fire of musketry was opened from the walls, but, wholly disregarding this, the earl at the head of his men dashed up to the gates and demanded, in an imperious tone, that the principal inhabitants should assemble and hold parley with him.

The boldness of the earl's manner and the imperative tone in which he spoke so astonished the citizens on the walls that they ceased firing, and sent for their magistrates and priests. When these assembled on the wall Peterborough told them in an angry tone that he gave them only six minutes for deliberation, and that if they offered the slightest resistance he would repeat at Nules the massacre which Las Torres had carried out at Villa-Real. He added that, unless they instantly surrendered, he would blow down their walls the moment his artillery and engineers arrived. The terror-stricken magistrates at once summoned the town council, and, upon their repeating Peterborough's terrible threats, it was resolved at once to surrender, and the six minutes had scarcely elapsed when the gates fell back on their hinges, and Peterborough and his dragoons entered the town in triumph.

Here the wearied band enjoyed a rest for some days, Peterborough spreading the alarm, which his presence excited, by giving orders that great quantities of provisions and forage should be brought in from all directions for the supply of the

large army, which he stated to be following at his heels. As it never occurred to anyone that he could be pursuing an army of seven thousand men through a hostile country with only a handful of dragoons, his statements were not doubted. The requisitions were complied with, and provisions and stores poured into the town.

Las Torres at Almenara, where he had again perpetrated a horrible massacre, heard the news of the great preparations that Peterborough was making for the supply of his army, and considering his position to be unsafe again retreated hastily.

At Nules two hundred horses were found, and at once appropriated for the use of the army. With a portion of his force Peterborough rode out to Castillon de la Plana, an open town of some size, where the people were well affected to the Austrian cause. Here he secured four hundred more horses, at the same time assuring both friends and foes that his army was driving the enemy out of the kingdom. On entering Nules, Peterborough had sent orders for Lord Barrymore's regiment of British infantry, at that time under the command of Colonel Pierce, to march from Viñaroz, where they had been sent with the rest of the infantry from San Matteo, to Oropesa, a town about nine miles from Castillon, where he had collected all the horses he had obtained during his march.

When the news reached Nules of the arrival of this regiment at Oropesa, Lord Peterborough at once rode over. The regiment was formed up for his inspection; it had marched with the greatest



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speed, and the men were worn out and footsore with their long tramp over the stony hills. After inspecting them the earl paid them a high compliment upon their past achievements, and concluded by expressing his wish that they had but horses and accoutrements to try whether a corps of so high a character would maintain their reputation in the novelty of mounted service.

The joke of their eccentric general seemed but a poor one to the footsore and almost shoeless men, but they were astonished when Jack rode forward and presented to each of the officers a commission, which he had drawn out in the earl's name, as cavalry officers. Their astonishment was changed to delight when Peterborough marched them to the brow of the hill where they stood, and they saw eight bodies of horses drawn up in order ready for their eight companies. Among these were set apart three good chargers for each captain, two for lieutenants, and one for cornets. He ordered the regiment to mount, and, immensely amused at their sudden elevation to the cavalry service, the troops rode back to the town.

From the moment when he started from San Matteo Peterborough had, in spite of his incessant exertions and multifarious cares, been quietly making preparations for this event. He had sent to Barcelona for the necessary accoutrements for these men and for the dismounted British dragoons. The accoutrements had been sent from Barcelona to the nearest port on the seacoast, and, by continually urging on the local carriers, the earl had,

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in nine days after leaving San Matteo, collected them in readiness at his depot at Castillon, and thus raised his little band of horse to nearly a thousand men. These he dispersed at once among the well-affected towns of the neighbourhood, whose walls would render them safe from the attack of an enemy unsupported by artillery, moving them constantly from place to place, partly to accustom them to their new duties, partly to confuse the enemy as to their numbers.

CHAPTER X

An Adventure in the Mountains

‘MR. STILWELL,’ the earl said, a few days after his arrival at Castillon, “will you take twenty dragoons and ride out to the village of Estrella? The district round it is extremely hostile, and they prevent supplies being brought in from that direction. Get hold of the principal men in the place, and tell them that if I hear any more complaints of hostility in that neighbourhood I will send out a regiment of horse, burn their village, and ravage all the country. I don’t think you need apprehend any opposition; but of course you will keep a good lookout.”

“Am I to return to-night, sir?”

“Let that depend upon your reception. If the inhabitants show a fairly good disposition, or if you see that at any rate there is a considerable section of the population well disposed to the cause, stay there for the night, and in the morning make a wide circuit through the district before returning. If you perceive a strong hostile feeling it were best not to sleep there; with so small a force you would be liable to a night attack.”

Twenty minutes later Jack rode off with his

party, having first obtained directions from the natives as to the best road to Estrella. The village was but some fifteen miles off, and lay in the centre of a fertile district on the other side of a range of lofty hills. The road they were traversing ran through the hills by a narrow and very steep valley.

"This would be a nasty place to be attacked," Jack said to the sergeant, who was riding just behind him.

"It would, indeed, sir; and if they were to set some of those stones a-rolling they would soon knock our horses off their legs."

A mile or two farther on the road again descended and the valley opened to a fertile country. Another half-hour's sharp riding brought them into Estrella. Their coming had probably been signalled, for the inhabitants evinced no sudden alarm as the little troop rode along the principal street. The women stood at the doors of the houses to look at them, the men were gathered in little knots at the corners; but all were unarmed, and Jack saw at once that there was no intention of offering resistance. He alighted at the door of the village inn, and in a few minutes two or three of the chief men in the village presented themselves.

"The English general," Jack said, "has heard that the people of your neighbourhood are hostile, and that those who would pass through with animals and stores for the army are prevented from doing so. He bids me say that he does not wish

to war with the people of this country so long as they are peaceful. Those who take up arms he will meet with arms; but so long as they interfere not with him he makes no enquiry as to whether their wishes are for King Charles or Philip of Anjou; but if they evince an active hostility he will be forced to punish them. You know how Marshal Tessé has massacred unarmed citizens whom he deemed hostile, and none could blame the English general did he carry out reprisals; but it will grieve him to have to do so. He has therefore sent me with this small troop to warn you that if the people of this village and district interfere in any way with his friends, or evince signs of active hostility, he will send a regiment of horse with orders to burn the village to the ground, and to lay all the district bare."

"Your general has been misinformed," the principal man in the place said. "There are, it is true, some in the district who hold for Philip of Anjou; but the population are well disposed to King Charles, and this village is ready to furnish any supplies that the English may require. If your honour will give me a list of these I will do my best to have them in readiness by to-morrow morning, and I trust that you will honour us by stopping here till then."

Jack hesitated; he did not much like the appearance of the man or the tone of humility in which he spoke; still, as he offered to furnish supplies, he thought it well to accept the same.

"What horses could you let us have?" he asked.

"We could supply ten horses," the man said, "fit for cavalry, four wagons of grain, and twenty barrels of wine."

"Very well," Jack said; "if these are ready by to-morrow morning I will accept them as an earnest of your goodwill, and now I require food for my men."

"That shall be ready for them in an hour," the man replied.

Jack now gave orders to the sergeant that the girths to the saddles should be loosened, and the horses fastened in readiness for service in the street close to the inn. Four men were then posted as pickets at the distance of a quarter of a mile on each side of the village. Corn was brought for the horses. The women and children gathered round to gaze at the foreign soldiers, and Jack was convinced that there was at any rate no intention to effect a surprise while he remained in the village. In an hour the dinner was served, and there was no reason to complain of the quantity or quality of the provisions.

An hour after dinner the troop again mounted and took a detour of some miles through the district, passing through several other villages, in none of which were the slightest signs of hostility met with. "Sergeant," Jack said, after they had returned to Estrella, "everything looks very quiet and peaceful; but, considering what we have heard of the feeling in this district, it seems to me that it is almost too peaceful. I can't help feeling somewhat uneasy. When it gets dark divide the

troop into two parties; keep one constantly under arms; place sentries in pairs at each end of the village, and keep a most vigilant watch. Do not let the others scatter to the quarters the mayor has provided; but let all lie down here in the inn ready to turn out at a moment's notice. They are a treacherous lot these Spaniards, and we cannot be too strictly on our guard."

The night passed, however, without an incident, and in the morning the five wagons with grain and wine, and eight horses, were brought in.

Jack, rather ashamed of his suspicions on the previous night, thanked the mayor warmly. Eight of the troopers took each a led horse. The four countrymen in charge of the wagons shouted to their oxen, and the party moved out from Estrella.

"There are very few men about the village, Mr. Stilwell," the sergeant said, as Jack reined back his horse to speak to him. "Did you notice that, sir?"

"Yes," Jack said, "I did notice it; for except a few old men and boys, there were none but women and children gathered round or standing at their door. There were plenty of men about yesterday; but perhaps they have all gone up to work in the fields; however, we will keep our eyes open. You had best ride forward, sergeant, to the two men in front and tell them to keep a sharp lookout."

They were proceeding only at a slow walk in order to keep pace with the wagons, and it was

an hour and a half after leaving Estrella before they entered the hills.

Jack noticed that although many women and girls could be seen working in the fields, not a man was in sight.

"It is curious, sergeant, that there are no men about, and I can't help thinking that all is not right. Do you take four men with you and ride straight on through that nasty narrow valley we noticed as we came. Keep a sharp lookout on both sides, for there are rocks enough on those hills to hide an army."

Jack halted the detachment when the scouting party went forward. In three-quarters of an hour the sergeant returned with his men, saying that he had ridden right through the valley and could see no signs of life whatever.

"Very well, sergeant, then we will proceed. But we will do so in groups. If we are to be attacked in that valley, we could make no fight of it were we ten times as many as we are; and if we must be caught, they shall have as few of us as possible; therefore, let a corporal with four men go on a good quarter of a mile ahead, so that he will be past the worst part before the next body enter. Then do you take ten men and go next. I will follow you at the same distance with the other five men and the wagons. Order the corporal if attacked to ride through if possible; if not, to fall back to you. Do you do the same. If you are nearly through the valley when you are attacked, dash straight forward. I shall see what is going on,

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and will turn and ride back with my party, and making a sweep round through the flat country find my way back by some other road. In that case by no possibility can they get more than a few of us."

These orders, which were well calculated to puzzle a concealed enemy, were carried out. The corporal's party were just disappearing round a turn at the upper end of the valley when the main body under the sergeant entered it. Jack was not quite so far behind, and halted as he entered the valley to allow those who preceded him to get through before he proceeded. They were still some two hundred yards from the further end when a shot was heard, and in an instant men appeared from behind every rock, and the hillside was obscured with smoke as upwards of two hundred guns were fired almost simultaneously. Then there was a deep rumbling noise, and the rocks came bounding down from above.

The sergeant carried out Jack's orders. At the flash of the first gun he set off with his men at a gallop; and so quick and sudden was the movement that but few of the bullets touched them, and the rocks for the most part thundered down in their rear. Two or three horses and men were, however, struck down and crushed by the massive rocks; but the rest of the party got through the pass in safety and joined their comrades who had preceded them. They rode on for a short distance further, and then there was a halt, and wounds were examined and bandaged.

"It is well that we came as we did," the sergeant said to his corporal; "if we had been all together, with the wagons blocking up the road, not a man-jack of us would have escaped alive. What an escape it has been! the whole hillside seemed coming down on us."

"What will Mr. Stilwell do, sergeant?"

"He said he should ride back into the plain and take some other way round," the sergeant replied; "but I fear he won't find it so easy. Fellows who would lay such an ambush as that are pretty sure to have taken steps to cut off the retreat of any who might escape and ride back. I am sure I hope he will get out of it, for he is a good officer, and as pleasant a young fellow as one can want to serve under; besides, there are five of our chaps with him."

Jack had halted his men the instant the first shot was fired. "Shall I shoot these fellows, sir?" one of the troopers asked, drawing his pistol and pointing it at the head of the peasant leading a yoke of oxen.

"No," Jack said; "they are unarmed; besides, they are plucky fellows for risking their lives on such a venture. There! the sergeant's troop have got through; but there are two or three of them down. Come along, lads, we must ride back, and there is no time to lose. Keep well together, and in readiness to charge if I give the word. It is likely enough our turn may come next."

They rode on without interruption at full gallop till they neared the lower end of the valley. Then

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Jack drew up his horse. Across the road and the ground on each side, extended a dozen carts, the oxen being taken out, and the carts placed end to end so as to form a barricade. A number of men were standing behind them.

"I expected something of this sort," Jack muttered. He looked at the hills on either side, but they were too steep to ride up on horseback, and as to abandoning the animals and taking to the hills on foot, it was not to be thought of, for the active peasants would easily overtake them.

"We must ride straight forward," he said; "there is no other way out of it. There is level ground enough for a horse to pass round the left of the wagons. Ride for that point as hard as you can, and when you are through keep straight forward for a quarter of a mile till we are together again. Now!"

Giving his horse the spur, Jack dashed off at full speed, followed closely by the troopers. As they approached the line guns flashed out from the wagons, and the bullets sang thickly round them; but they were going too fast to be an easy mark, and the peasants, after firing their guns, seeing the point for which they were making, ran in a body to oppose them, armed with pitchforks and ox goads; few of them had, however, reached the spot when Jack and his troopers dashed up. There was a short sharp struggle, and then, leaving five or six of the peasants dead on the ground, the troopers burst through and rode forward. One

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man only had been lost in the passage, shot through the head as he approached the gap.

"So far we are safe," Jack said, "and as I expect every man in the country round was engaged in that ambush, we need not hurry for the present. The question is, Which way to go?"

This was indeed a difficult point to settle, for Jack was wholly ignorant of the country. He had made enquiries as to the way to Estrella, but knew nothing of any other roads leading from that village, and indeed, for aught he knew, the road by which he had come might be the only one leading to the south through the range of hills.

"We will turn west," he said, after a moment's thought, "and keep along near the foot of the hills till we come to another road crossing them."

So saying, he set forward at an easy trot across the fields of maize and wheat stubble, vineyards, and occasionally orchards. For upwards of two hours Jack led the way, but they saw no signs of a road, and he observed with uneasiness that the plain was narrowing fast and the hills on the left trending to meet those on the right and form an apparently unbroken line ahead.

The horses were showing signs of fatigue, and Jack drew rein on somewhat rising ground and looked anxiously round. If, as it seemed, there was no break in the hills ahead, it would be necessary to retrace their steps, and long ere this the defenders of the ravine would have returned to their homes, and learnt from the men at the carts that a small party had escaped. As the women in

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the fields would be able to point out the way they had taken, the whole population would be out in pursuit of them. Looking round, Jack saw among some trees to his right what appeared to be a large mansion, and resolved at once to go there.

"The horses must have food and a rest," he said, "before we set out again; and though it's hardly probable, as the peasants are so hostile, that the owner of this place is friendly, I would even at the worst rather fall into the hands of a gentleman than into those of these peasants, who would certainly murder us in cold blood."

Thus thinking, he rode straight towards the mansion, whose owner must, he thought as he approached it, be a man of importance, for it was one of the finest country residences he had seen in Spain. He rode up to the front door and dismounted and rang the bell. A man opened the door and looked with surprise and alarm at the English uniforms. He would have shut the door again, but Jack put his shoulder to it and pushed it open.

"What means this insolence?" he said sternly, drawing his pistol. "Is your master in?"

"No, señor," the man stammered, "the count is from home."

"Is your mistress in?"

The man hesitated.

"I will see," he said.

"Look here, sir," Jack said. "Your mistress is in, and unless you lead me straight to her I will put a bullet through your head."

Several other men servants had now come up, but

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the four troopers had also entered. The Spaniards looked at each other irresolutely.

"Now, sirrah," Jack said, raising his pistol, "are you going to obey me?"

The Spaniard, seeing Jack would excute his threat unless obeyed, turned sullenly, and led the way to a door. He opened it and entered.

"Madam the countess," he said, "an English officer insists on seeing you."

Jack followed him in. A lady had just risen from her seat.

"I must apologize, madam," he began, and then stopped in surprise, while at the same moment a cry of astonishment broke from the lady.

"Señor Stilwell!" she cried. "Oh! how glad I am to see you! but—but——" and she stopped.

"But how do I come here? countess, you would ask. I come here by accident, and had certainly no idea that I should find you, or that this mansion belonged to your husband. You told me when I saw you last, a fortnight before I left Barcelona, that you were going away to your seat in the country. You told me its name, too, and were good enough to say that you hoped when this war was over that I would come and visit you; but, in truth, as this is not a time for visiting, I had put the matter out of my mind."

"And do you belong, then," the countess asked, "to the party who we heard yesterday had arrived at Estrella? If so——" and she stopped again.

"If so, how have I escaped? you would ask. By good fortune and the speed of my horse."

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"What will the count say?" the countess exclaimed. "How will he ever forgive himself? Had he known that our preserver was with that party he would have cut off his right hand before he would have——"

"Led his tenants to attack us. He could not tell, countess, and now I hope that you will give your retainers orders to treat my men with hospitality. At present my four troopers and your men are glowering at each other in the hall like wolves and dogs ready to spring at each other's throats."

The countess at once went out into the hall. The servants had now armed themselves, and, led by the majordomo, were standing in readiness to attack the dragoons on the termination of the colloquy between the officer and their mistress.

"Lay aside your arms, men," the countess said imperiously. "These men are the count's guests. Enrico, do you not recognize this gentleman?"

The majordomo turned, and, at once dropping his musket, ran across, and, falling on his knees, pressed Jack's hand to his lips. The servants, who had at first stood in irresolute astonishment at their mistress's order, no longer hesitated, but placed their arms against the wall.

"This," the majordomo said to them, rising to his feet, "is the noble English lord who saved the lives of the count and countess and my young master from the mob at Barcelona, as I have often told you."

This explained the mystery. The servants

saluted Jack with profound respect, for all were deeply attached to the count and countess, and had often thrilled with fury and excitement over the majordomo's relation of that terrible scene at Barcelona.

Jack in a few words explained to the troopers the reason of the change in their position. The dragoons put up their swords, and were soon on the best terms with the retainers in the great kitchen, while Jack and the countess chatted over the events which had happened since they last parted.

"I shall always tremble when I think of to-day," the countess said. "What a feeling mine would have been all my life had our preserver been killed by my servants! I should never have recovered it. It is true it would have been an accident, and yet the possibility should have been foreseen. The count knew you were with the Earl of Peterborough, and the whole English army should have been sacred in his eyes for your sake; but I suppose he never thought of it any more than I did. Of course everyone knows that we belong to Philip's party. It was for that that the mob at Barcelona would have killed us; but my husband does not talk much, and when he left Barcelona no objection was raised. He did not intend to take part in the war, and he little thought at that time that an enemy would ever come so far from Barcelona; but yesterday, when a message came that a small party of the enemy had entered the valley, and that the peasants had prepared an ambuscade for them on their return, and that they hoped that the count

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their master would himself come and lead them to annihilate the heretics, the simple man agreed, never thinking that you might be among them. What will his feelings be when he learns it?"

Late in the afternoon the count arrived. One of the servants who had been on the lookout informed the countess of his approach.

"I will go myself to meet him," she said. "Do you stay here, señor, where you can hear."

The count rode up at full speed, and as the door opened ran hastily in.

"What has happened, Niña?" he exclaimed anxiously. "I have had a great fright. We have been following a small party of the enemy who escaped us from Estrella, and just now a woman returning from work in the fields told us she had seen five strange soldiers ride up here and enter."

"They are here," the countess answered complacently. "They are at present our guests."

"Our guests!" the count exclaimed astonished. "What are you saying, Niña? The enemies of our country our guests! In what a position have you placed me! I have two hundred armed men just behind. I left them to ride on when I heard the news, being too anxious to go at their pace, and now you tell me that these men of whom they are in search are our guests! What am I to say or do? You amaze me altogether."

"What would you have me do?" the countess said. "Could I refuse hospitality to wearied men who asked it, Juan?" she continued, changing her tone, "you have to thank Providence indeed that

those men came to our door instead of falling into the hands of your peasants."

"To thank Providence!" the count repeated astonished.

"Come with me and you will see why."

She led the way into the room, her husband following her. The count gave a cry as his eye fell upon Jack, and every vestige of colour left his face.

"Mary, mother of heaven!" he said in a broken voice, "I thank thee that I have been saved from a crime which would have embittered all my life. Oh, señor, is it thus we meet? Thus, when I have been hunting blindly for the blood of the man to whom I owe so much."

"Happily there is no harm done, count," Jack said, advancing with outstretched hand, "you were doing what you believed to be your duty, attacking the enemy of your country. Had you killed me you would have been no more to blame than I should, did a chance shot of mine slay you when fighting in the ranks of the soldiers of Philip."

The count was some time before he could respond to Jack's greeting, so great was his emotion at the thought of the escape he had had from slaying the preserver of his wife and child. As soon as he recovered himself he hurried out to meet the peasants, whose shouts could be heard as they approached the castle. He soon returned and bade his servants take a cask of wine into the courtyard behind the house, with what bread and meat there might be in the larder.

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"You had no trouble with them, I hope?" Jack asked.

"None whatever," the count said. "As soon as I told them the circumstances under which you saved the life of the countess, my boy, and myself, their only wish was to see you and express their gratitude; they are simple fellows these peasants, and if fairly treated greatly attached to their lords."

"It's a pity their treatment of the prisoners is so savage," Jack said dryly.

"They are savage," the count said, "but you must remember that the history of Spain is one long story of war and bloodshed. They draw knives on each other on the slightest provocation, and in their amusements, as you know, there is nothing that in their eyes can rival a bull fight; it is little wonder, then, that in war they are savage and, as you would say, even bloodthirsty. This is not so in regular warfare. Whatever may have been the conduct of some of our irregulars, none have ever alleged that Spanish troops are less inclined to give quarter to conquered foes than others; but in this rough irregular warfare each peasant fights on his own account as against a personal enemy, and as he would expect and would meet with little mercy if he fell into the enemy's hands, so he grants no mercy to those who fall into his. Indeed, after the brutal treatment which Marshal Tessé has, I am ashamed to say, dealt out to those who opposed him, you can scarcely blame peasants for acting as they see civilized soldiers do."

A short time afterwards Jack went out with the count into the courtyard, and was received with the most hearty and cordial greeting by the men who were an hour before thirsting for his blood. Among them was the village mayor.

"Ah, sir," he said, "why did you not tell us that you had saved the life of our dear lord and lady? you should have had all the horses in the district, and as many wagons of wine and grain as we could collect. We are all in despair that we should have attacked our lord's preserver."

"I could not tell you," Jack said, "because I was in ignorance that the Count de Minas was your lord; had I known it I should have assuredly gone straight to him."

"We shall never forgive ourselves," the man said, "for having killed four of your honour's soldiers."

"I am sorry that it was so," Jack said, "but I cannot blame you; and I am sorry that we on our part must have killed as many of yours."

"Six," the mayor replied. "Yes, poor fellows, but the count will see to their widows and orphans, he has promised us as much. I drink to your health, señor," and all present joined in the shout, "Long live the preserver of the count and countess!"

Jack and the count now returned to the house, and the next morning, after a cordial adieu to the host and hostess, he rode back with his men to Castillon.

"Welcome back, Mr. Stilwell," the general said

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as he entered, "I have been very uneasy about you. Your men returned at noon yesterday and told me of the ambush in which they had been beset. Your arrangements were excellent except for your own safety. How did you manage to get out? By the way, I was astonished by the arrival here an hour since of the horses and wagons. The men who brought them could give me no account of it, except that the mayor of Estrella returned late yesterday evening and ordered them to set out before daybreak. It seemed to me a perfect mystery. I suspected at first that the wine was poisoned, and ordered the men who brought it to drink some at once, but as they did so without hesitation or sign of fear, I concluded that I was mistaken. However, I have kept them captive pending news from you to enlighten me."

"I am not surprised you were astonished, sir, but the matter was simple enough;" and then Jack related the circumstances which had befallen them.

"Bravo!" the earl said, "for once, Mr. Stilwell, a good action has had its reward, which, so far as my experience goes, is an exception."

The earl at once called in a sergeant and ordered the release of the men who had brought the horses and wagons, and gave ten gold pieces to be distributed among them. Jack also went out and begged them to give his compliments and thanks to the mayor.

"I am heartily glad the adventure ended as it did," the earl said when he returned, "for, putting aside the regret I should have felt at your loss, it

would have been a difficult business for me to undertake, with my present force, to chastise the men who attacked you, who must be bold and determined fellows, and capable of realizing the advantages of this mountainous country. If all Spaniards would do as much it would tax the power of the greatest military nation to subdue them; and yet I could hardly have suffered such a check without endeavouring to avenge it; so altogether, Mr. Stilwell, we must congratulate ourselves that the affair ended as it did. In any case you would have been in no way to blame, for your dispositions throughout appear to have been excellent, and marked alike with prudence and boldness."

CHAPTER XI

Valencia

WHILE occupied in preparing for his advance, the general sent letter after letter to Valencia, bidding the citizens to keep up their courage, and promising to hasten to the relief of that city. Ordering Jack to continue the correspondence in his name, so as to delude both friends and foes that he was still at Castellon, he took post secretly and hurried away back to Tortosa to see after reinforcements. He still doubted whether the Spanish troops, which the king had promised should be at his disposal for the campaign in Valencia, had got into motion, and in case they had not done so he determined to post to Colonel Wills and bring up that officer with his brigade.

At Viñaroz he found that the Spanish troops had already entered Valencia, and that some of the militia of that province and of Catalonia were also in motion to join him. He therefore concentrated his little force at Castellon, to which place he returned as rapidly as he had left it. When it was assembled it consisted of a thousand horse and two thousand infantry, being one English and three Spanish battalions of regulars. Besides these were

about three thousand armed peasants, whom the earl thought it better not to join with his army, and therefore quartered them at Almenara.

Although he had accomplished marvels, there was yet much to do. The Duke of Arcos had succeeded the Conde de las Torres in the chief command, the latter having been superseded after his signal failures. The duke had ten thousand men placed under his orders, of whom three thousand five hundred were in possession of the strong town of Murviedro, which covered the approach to Valencia, while with the main body he marched upon Valencia and commenced the siege of that city. The magistrates, knowing that they could expect but little mercy should the town be taken, made vigorous preparations for defence, and despatched some messengers to Peterborough imploring him to come to their assistance. He was now in readiness to do so, and on the 1st of February marched from Castillon with his army.

Having unlimited powers, the earl, before starting, presented to his two aides-de-camp commissions as captains, as a reward for the services they had rendered.

Although so inferior in numbers the little army advanced towards Valencia with an absolute confidence of victory. The successes gained by their leader with a handful of cavalry over an army of seven thousand men, had been so astounding, that his troops believed him capable of effecting anything that he undertook. They had seen him ride off from San Matteo with his little body of horse

upon what seemed an impossible enterprise; they had met him again after having conquered half a province; and if he had accomplished this with such scanty means, what was not possible now when he had three thousand men at his disposal?

But the earl trusted fully as much to his talents in the way of deceiving the enemy as to his power of defeating them by open force in the field. His eccentric genius appeared to revel in the mendacious statements by which he deceived and puzzled both friend and foe; and although the spreading of a certain amount of false news for the purpose of deceiving an enemy has always been considered as a legitimate means of warfare, Peterborough altogether exceeded the usual limits, and appeared to delight in inventing the most complicated falsehoods from the mere love of mischief. At times Jack was completely bewildered by his general, so rapid were the changes of plans, so changeable his purposes, so fantastic and eccentric his bearing and utterances. That his military genius was astonishing no one can for a moment question, but it was the genius rather of a knight errant than of the commander of great armies.

As a partisan leader Peterborough is without a rival in history. Whether he would have succeeded equally well as the commander of great armies he had never an opportunity of proving, but it is more than doubtful. Rapid changes of plan, shifting and uncertain movements, may lead to wonderful successes when but a small body of troops have to be set in motion, but would cause endless confu-

sion and embarrassment with a large army, which can only move in accordance with settled plans and deliberate purpose.

It must be said, however, that this most eccentric of generals proved upon many occasions, as at the siege of Barcelona, that he was capable of adapting himself to circumstances, and it is possible that, had he ever been placed in command of a great army, he would have laid aside his flightiness and eccentricity, his love for theatrical strokes and hair-breadth adventures, and would have exhibited a steadfast military genius which would have placed his name in the annals of British history on a par with those of Wellington and Marlborough. Never did he exhibit his faculty for ingenious falsehood more remarkably than at Murviedro, where, indeed, a great proportion of his inventions appear to have been prompted rather by a spirit of malice than by any military necessity.

Murviedro was the Saguntum of the Romans, one of the strongest cities in Spain. The force there was commanded by Brigadier-general Mahony, an officer of Irish descent. He had under him 500 regular cavalry and a battalion of 800 trained infantry; the rest of his force consisted of Spanish militia. The town itself was fairly strong and contained a large population. It was separated from a wide plain by a river, on the banks of which redoubts mounted with artillery had been thrown up.

Here the Valencian road wound through a pass, above which, on the crest of a lofty overhanging

hill, were the ruins of ancient Saguntum. Peterborough had no artillery save a few Spanish field guns; the enemy's position was formidable both by formation and art, and his force was altogether inadequate for an attack upon it. So hopeless did the attempt appear to be that Peterborough's officers were unanimous in the opinion that it would be better to make a wide circuit and avoid the place, and to march directly upon Valencia and give battle to the Duke of Arcos under its walls. Peterborough, however, simply told them to wait and see what would come of it, and in the meantime he continued to bewilder his foes by the most surprising romances.

His agents were for the most part a few sharp-witted dragoons, and some peasants whose fidelity was secured by their families being held as hostages. He had already contrived to bewilder the division of Las Torres before it reached the main body under the Duke of Arcos. A spy in his pay had informed the Spanish general that the British were close upon him, and he had accordingly at once broken up his camp and marched all night.

In the morning the spy again presented himself and stated that the British were pushing on over the mountains to his left to occupy an important point and to cut off his retreat to the Valencian plains. As it seemed absolutely impossible that they could have pressed forward so quickly Las Torres refused to credit the story. The spy, as if indignant at his truth being doubted, pledged himself at the hazard of his life to give proof of the

assertion to any officer who might be sent to ascertain it.

Two officers in plain clothes were accordingly sent with him in the direction where he stated the English to be; but when they stopped for refreshment at a village on the way they were suddenly pounced upon by a picket of English dragoons, who had been sent there for the purpose. After a time the spy pretended to the two officers that he had made the guard drunk and that they could now make their escape, and leading them stealthily to the stable showed them two of the dragoons lying in an apparently drunken sleep. Three horses were quietly led out of the stable, and the three men rode off, some of the dragoons making a show of pursuit.

This incident, of course, established the credit of the spy. Las Torres was convinced that his retreat was really threatened, and hurried on again with all speed, while all this time the English army was really many miles away near Murviedro. Other dragoons were induced to feign desertion, while some permitted themselves to be taken prisoners, and as each vied with the others in the extravagance of his false information, the Spanish generals were utterly bewildered by the contradictory nature of the lies that reached them.

While Las Torres was hastening away at full speed to join the Duke of Arcos, Peterborough was occupied in fooling Mahony. That officer was a distant relation of Lady Peterborough, and the earl sent to demand an interview with him, naming a

small hill near the town for the purpose. When the time for the interview approached the earl disposed his army so as to magnify their numbers as much as possible. Some were posted as near the town as they could venture along the pass; others were kept marching on the lower slopes of the hills, their numbers increased in appearance by masses of the armed peasantry being mingled with them.

Mahony having received the earl's word for his safety rode out to the appointed place to meet him, accompanied by several of the principal Spanish officers. Peterborough first used every persuasion to induce Mahony to enter the service of King Charles, but the Irish officer refused to entertain the tempting offers which he made. Peterborough then changed his tone, and said with an air of kindly frankness:

“The Spaniards have used such severities and cruelties at Villa-Real as to oblige me to retaliate. I am willing to spare a town if under your protection. I know that you cannot pretend to defend it with the horse you have, which will be so much more useful in another place if joined with the troops of Arcos to obstruct my passing the plains of Valencia. I am confident that you will soon quit Murviedro, which I can as little prevent as you can hinder me from taking the town. The inhabitants there must be exposed to the most abject miseries, and I can in no way preserve it but by being bound in a capitulation, which I am willing to give you if I have the assurance of the

immediate surrender of the place this very night. Some cases are so apparent that I need not dissemble. I know you will immediately send to the Duke of Arcos to march to the Carthusian convent and meet him there with the body of horse under your command."

The earl further offered, in the same apparent spirit of frankness, to show Mahony all his troops and artillery, as well as the large resources he had upon the sea, which was only six miles off. Mahony was entirely deceived by the manner of the man he regarded as a relative, and laughingly acknowledged that he had, in case of necessity, intended to fall back with his cavalry upon the Duke of Arcos. The interview ended by Mahony retiring to the town, agreeing to send back an answer in half an hour. At the end of that time he sent out a capitulation by a Spanish officer.

Had Peterborough's scheme ended here he would not have exceeded the bounds of what is regarded as a fair method of deceiving an enemy, but his subsequent proceedings were absolutely indefensible, and are, indeed, almost incredible on the part of the man who in some respects carried the point of honour almost to an extreme. His notion, no doubt, was to paralyse the action of the enemy by exciting suspicions of treachery among their leaders, but the means which he took to do so were base and unworthy in the extreme.

He began with the Spanish officer who had brought the capitulation, giving him a garbled account of his interview with Mahony, and then

endeavouring to bribe him to desert to the Austrian cause, insinuating that he had succeeded by this means with Mahony. As the earl expected, he failed to induce the Spaniard to desert, but he succeeded in his purpose of filling his mind with suspicions of treachery on the part of Mahony.

Mahony had conducted the negotiations in a manner worthy of a loyal and skilful officer; he had stipulated not to leave the town till one o'clock in the morning, and that Peterborough should not pass the river until that hour.

This he had arranged in order to allow the Duke of Arcos time to reach the plains, where he was to be joined by the horse from Murviedro. But Peterborough's machinations had been effectual; the Spanish officer, on his return, informed his countrymen that Mahony had betrayed them, and the troops and population became enraged against the unfortunate Irishman and threatened his life. Peterborough, who, in spite of his perverted notions of honour, would not on any account have passed the river before the time stipulated, heard the neighing of horses in the town and supposed that some of the troops were leaving it. In order, therefore, to create suspicion and confusion among the enemy, he ordered a body of men near the river to fire straggling shots as if small parties were engaged at the outposts.

Mahony hearing these sounds sent word that whatever collision might have occurred it was the result of no breach of the terms of capitulation on his part, and that, depending implicitly on the

honour of an English general, he could not believe that any foul play could take place. Peterborough sent back his compliments by the officer who brought the message, with expressions of gratification at the good understanding which prevailed between them, and at the same time he proposed that Mahony, for the security of the inhabitants of Murviedro, and to prevent his troops being molested as they retired from the town, should permit a regiment of English dragoons to cross the river and to form a guard at the gates, offering at the same time to deliver up a number of his officers as hostages to the Spanish for the loyal fulfilment of the terms.

In an evil hour for himself Mahony consented to the proposal. When the Spaniards saw Peterborough's dragoons advancing without opposition through the difficult pass, and up to the very gates of the town, their suspicions of the treachery of their leader became a certainty. The Spanish officers each got his company or troop together as quickly as possible, and hurried across the plain to the camp of the duke, where they spread a vague but general panic. The officers accused Mahony of treachery to the Spanish general, and the national jealousy of foreigners made their tale easily believed; but Peterborough had taken another step to secure the success of his diabolical plan against the honour of his wife's relative.

He made choice of two Irish dragoons, and persuaded them by bribes and promises of promotion to undertake the dangerous part of false deserters,

and to tell the tale with which he furnished them. They accordingly set out and rode straight to the camp of the Duke of Arcos and gave themselves up to the outposts, by whom they were led before the Spanish general. Questioned by him, they repeated the story they had been taught.

The statement was, that they had been sitting drinking wine together under some rocks on the hillside, close to where the conference was held, and that Peterborough and Mahony, walking apart from the others, came near to where they were sitting but did not notice them, and that they saw the earl deliver 5000 pistoles to Mahony, and heard him promise to make him a major-general in the English army, and to give him the command of 10,000 Irish Catholics which were being raised for the service of King Charles. They said that they were content to receive no reward but to be shot as spies if Mahony himself did not give proof of treachery by carrying out his arrangements with the earl, by sending a messenger requesting the duke to march that night across the plain towards Murviedro to the Carthusian convent, where everything would be arranged for their destruction by a strong ambush of British troops.

Scarcely had the men finished their story when an aide-de-camp galloped in from Mahony with the very proposition which they had reported that he would make. Arcos had now no doubt whatever of Mahony's treason, and instead of complying with his request, which was obviously the best course to have been pursued, as the junction of the

two armies would thereby have been completed, the duke broke up his camp without delay and fell back in exactly the opposite direction.

This was exactly what Peterborough had been scheming to bring about. Mahony, with his cavalry, having delivered over the town, marched to the Carthusian convent, and there, finding themselves unsupported, rode on to the spot where the duke had been encamped, and, finding that his army was gone, followed it. On overtaking it Mahony was instantly arrested and sent a prisoner to Madrid.

It is satisfactory to know that he succeeded in clearing himself from the charge of treachery, was promoted to the rank of major-general, and was sent back with Las Torres, who was ordered to supersede the Duke of Arcos.

The success of the earl's stratagem had been complete. Without the loss of a single man he had obtained possession of Murviedro, and had spread such confusion and doubt into the enemy's army that, although more than three times his own force, it was marching away in all haste, having abandoned the siege of Valencia, which city he could now enter with his troops. The success was a wonderful one; but it is sad to think that it was gained by such a treacherous and dastardly manœuvre, which might have cost a gallant officer—who was, moreover, a countryman and distant connection of the earl—his honour and his life.

The next day the earl entered the city of Valencia in triumph. The whole population crowded into

the streets. The houses were decorated with flags and hangings. The church bells pealed out their welcome, and amidst the shouts of the people below and the waving of handkerchiefs from the ladies at the balconies, he rode through the streets to the town hall, where all the principal personages were assembled, followed by the little army with which he had performed what appeared to have been an impossible undertaking.

After their incessant labours during the past two months, the rest at Valencia was most grateful to the troops. The city is celebrated as being one of the gayest and most delightful in all Spain. Its situation is lovely, standing within a mile and half of the sea, in a rich plain covered with vines, olives, and other fruit trees, while beyond the plains rise the mountains, range after range, with the higher summits covered with snow. The people, at all times pleasure-loving, gave themselves up to fêtes and rejoicings for some time after the entrance of the army that had saved them from such imminent danger, and all vied in hospitality to the earl and his officers.

King Charles, astonished and delighted at Peterborough's success, appointed him captain-general of all his forces, and gave him the power of appointing and removing all governors and other public servants, as he might consider necessary for the good of the cause, while from London the earl received a despatch appointing him plenipotentiary at the court of King Charles.

Here as at Barcelona the earl entered with almost

boyish animation into the gaiety of which he was the centre. With the priests and ladies he was an especial favourite, having won the former by the outward respect which he paid to their religion, and by the deference he exhibited towards themselves.

Valencia prided itself on being one of the holiest cities in Spain, and no other town could boast of the connection of so many saints or the possession of so many relics. The priesthood were numerous and influential. Religious processions were constantly passing through the streets, and in the churches the services were conducted with the greatest pomp and magnificence.

Peterborough, knowing the value of the alliance and assistance of the priests, spared no pains to stand well with the Church, revenging himself for the outward deference he paid to it by the bitterest sarcasm and jeers in his letters to his friends at home. Believing nothing himself, the gross superstition which he saw prevailing round him was an argument in favour of his own disbelief in holy things, and he did not fail to turn it to advantage.

With the ladies his romantic adventures, his extraordinary bravery, his energy and endurance, his brilliant wit, his polished manner, his courtesy and devotion, rendered him an almost mythical hero; and the fair Valencians were to a woman his devoted admirers and adherents.

But, while apparently absorbed in pleasure, Peterborough's energy never slumbered for a moment. His position was still one of extreme

danger. The force of Las Torres, seven thousand strong, recovering from their panic, had, a day or two after he entered the town, returned and taken post on some hills near it, preparatory to recommencing the siege. Four thousand Castilians were marching to their support by the road leading through Fuente de la Higuera, while at Madrid, within an easy distance, lay the overwhelming forces of the main army under Marshal Tessé. To cope with these forces he had but his little army in the town, amounting to but three thousand men, deficient in artillery, ammunition, and stores of all kinds.

Had Marshal Tessé marched at once to join Las Torres Peterborough's little force must have been crushed; but the court of King Philip decided to despatch the marshal against Barcelona. Fortunately Peterborough was well informed by the country people of everything that was passing, for in every town and village there were men or women who sent him news of all that was going on in their neighbourhood.

It was but a week after they entered Valencia that the earl, happening to pass close by Jack Stilwell at a brilliant ball, paused for a moment and said:

"Get away from this in half an hour, find Graham, and bring him with you to my quarters. Before you go find Colonel Zinzendorf and tell him to have two hundred men ready to mount at half-past one. He is here somewhere. If you find he has left you must go round to the barracks. Tell

him the matter is to be kept an absolute secret. I know," the earl said gallantly to the lady on his arm, and to Jack's partner, "we can trust you two ladies to say nothing of what you have heard. It is indeed grief and pain to myself and Captain Stilwell to tear ourselves away from such society, and you may be sure that none but the most pressing necessity could induce me to do it."

Jack at once led his partner to a seat and set out on the search for Graham and the colonel of dragoons. He was some time in finding them both, and it was already past one when the three issued together from the palace where the fête was held, and hurried off, the two young officers to Peterborough's quarters, the colonel to his barracks.

The earl was already in his chamber. He had slipped away unobserved from the ball, and had climbed the wall of the garden, to avoid being noticed passing out of the entrance. His great wig and court uniform were thrown aside, and he was putting on the plain uniform which he used on service when his aide-de-camp entered:

"Get rid of that finery and gold lace," he said as they entered. "You have to do a forty-mile ride before morning. I have received glorious news. One of my partners told me that she had, just as she was starting for the ball, received a message from a cousin saying that a vessel had come into port from Genoa with sixteen brass 24-pounder guns, and a quantity of ammunition and stores, to enable Las Torres to commence the siege. The stores were landed yesterday, and

carts were collected from the country round in readiness for a start at daybreak this morning. As these things will be even more useful to us than to the Spaniards, I mean to have them now. Be as quick as you can. I have already ordered your horses to be brought round with mine."

In five minutes they were in the saddle and rode quickly to the cavalry barracks. The streets were still full of people; but the earl in his simple uniform passed unnoticed through them. The dragoons were already mounted when they reached the barracks.

"We will go out at the back gate, colonel," the earl said. "Take the most quiet streets by the way, and make for the west gate. Break your troop up into four parties, and let them go by different routes, so that any they meet will suppose they are merely small bodies going out to relieve the outposts. If it was suspected that I was with you, and that an expedition was on foot, the Spaniards would hear it in an hour. Loyal as the population are here, there must be many adherents of Philip among them, and Las Torres no doubt has his spies as well as we have."

The earl's orders were carried out, and half an hour later the four parties again assembled at a short distance outside the city gates. Peterborough placed himself at their head and rode directly for the sea.

"The Spaniards are sure to have outposts placed on all the roads leading inland," he said to Colonel Zinzendorf, "and the Spanish irregulars will be

scattered all over the country; but I do not suppose they will have any down as far as the seashore."

When they reached the coast they followed a small road running along its margin. Two or three miles farther they turned off and rode inland till they struck a main road, so as to avoid following all the windings of the coast. They now pushed on at a sharp trot, and just at four o'clock came down upon the little port.

Its streets were cumbered with country carts, and as the dragoons dashed into the place a few shots were fired by some Spanish soldiers belonging to a small detachment which had been sent by Las Torres to act as a convoy for the guns and stores, and who were sleeping on the pavement or scattered among the houses in readiness for a start at daybreak. The resistance soon ceased. Before entering the place Peterborough had placed a cordon of dragoons in a semicircle round it to prevent anyone passing out.

No time was lost; the carts were already loaded, and a troop of cavalry horses stood picketed by the guns. These were soon harnessed up, and the few other horses in the place were seized to prevent anyone riding off with the news. The order was given to the peasants to start their carts, and in ten minutes after their entering the place the convoy was on its way with its long row of carts laden with ammunition and its sixteen guns.

The cordon of dragoons was still left round the town, the officer in command being ordered to

allow no one to pass for an hour and a half, after which time he was to gallop on with his men to overtake the convoy, as by that time it would be no longer possible for anyone to carry the news to Las Torres in time for him to put his troops into motion to cut off the convoy from Valencia. The journey back took much longer than the advance, for the carts, drawn for the most part by bullocks, made but slow progress. Three hours after the convoy started the dragoons left behind overtook them. When within three miles of the town, they were met by a small party of the enemy's Spanish militia; but these were at once scattered by a charge of the dragoons, and the convoy proceeded without further molestation until just at noon it entered the gates of Valencia, where the astonishment and delight of the inhabitants at its appearance were unbounded.

In a few hours the cannon were all mounted in position on the ramparts, adding very much to the defensive power of the town, which was now safe for a time from any attempt at a siege by Las Torres, whose plans would be entirely frustrated by the capture of the artillery intended for the siege.

But Peterborough was not yet contented. The junction of the four thousand Castilians, of whose approach he had heard, with Las Torres would raise the force under that general to a point which would enable him to blockade the town pending the arrival of artillery for siege works; and no sooner had the earl returned to his quarters, after

seeing the cannon placed upon the walls, than he began his preparation for another expedition. He ordered Colonel Zinzendorf to march quietly out of the city at eight o'clock with four hundred of his dragoons, and four hundred British and as many Spanish infantry were to join him outside the walls. The colonels of these three bodies were ordered to say nothing of their intended movement, and to issue no orders until within half an hour of the time named. At the same hour the rest of the troops were to march to the walls and form a close cordon round them, so as to prevent anyone from letting himself down by a rope, and taking the news that an expedition was afoot, to Las Torres.

At a few minutes past eight, eight hundred foot and four hundred horse assembled outside the gates, and Peterborough took the command. His object was to crush the Castilians before they could effect a junction with Las Torres. In order to do this it would be necessary to pass close by the Spanish camp, which covered the road by which the reinforcements were advancing to join them.

In perfect silence the party moved forward and marched to a ford across the river Xucar, a short distance only below the Spanish camp. Peterborough rode at their head, having by his side a Spanish gentleman acquainted with every foot of the country. They forded the river without being observed, and then, making as wide a circuit as possible round the camp, came down upon the road without the alarm being given, then they pushed forward, and after three hours' march came

upon the Castilians at Fuente de la Higuera. The surprise was complete. The Spaniards, knowing that the Spanish army lay between them and the town, had taken no precautions, and the British were in possession of the place before they were aware of their danger.

There was no attempt at resistance beyond a few hasty shots. The Castilians were sleeping wrapt up in their cloaks around the place, and on the alarm they leapt up and fled wildly in all directions. In the darkness great numbers got away, but six hundred were taken prisoners. An hour was spent in collecting and breaking the arms left behind by the fugitives, and the force, with their prisoners in their midst, then started back on their return march. The circuit of the Spanish camp was made, and the ford passed, as successfully as before, and just as daylight was breaking the little army marched into Valencia.

The news rapidly spread, and the inhabitants hurried into the streets, unable at first to credit the news that the Castilian army, whose approach menaced the safety of the town, was destroyed. The movement of the troops on the previous night to the ramparts, and the absence of the greater part of the officers from the festivities, had occasioned some comment, but as none knew that an expedition had set out, it was supposed that the earl had received news from his spies that Las Torres intended to attempt a sudden night attack, and the people would have doubted the astonishing news they now received had it not been for

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the presence of the six hundred Castilian prisoners.

These two serious misadventures caused Las Torres to despair of success against a town defended by so energetic and enterprising a commander as Peterborough, and he now turned his thoughts towards the small towns of Sueca and Alcira. Below these towns, and commanded by their guns, was the important bridge of Cullera, by which by far the greater portion of the supplies for the town was brought in from the country. Las Torres, therefore, determined to seize these places, which were distant about fifteen miles from his camp, and so to straiten the town for provisions.

As usual Peterborough's spies brought him early intelligence of the intended movement, and the orders issued by Las Torres were known to the earl a few hours later. It needed all his activity to be in time. Five hundred English and six hundred Spanish infantry, and four hundred horse, were ordered to march with all speed to the threatened towns, and, pushing on without a halt, the troops reached them half an hour before the Spanish force appeared on the spot. On finding the two towns strongly occupied by the British, Las Torres abandoned his intention and drew off his troops.

A portion of the Spanish army were cantoned in a village only some two miles from Alcira, and a few days later Peterborough determined to surprise it, and for that purpose marched out at night from Valencia with an English force of a thousand men, and reached the spot intended at daybreak as he

had arranged. The Spanish garrison of Alcira, also about a thousand strong, had orders to sally out and attack the village at the same hour. The Spaniards also arrived punctually, but just as they were preparing to burst upon the unconscious enemy, who were 4000 strong, they happened to come upon a picket of twenty horse. An unaccountable panic seized them, they broke their ranks and fled in such utter confusion that many of the terror-stricken soldiers killed each other. The picket aroused the enemy, who quickly fell into their ranks, and Peterborough, seeing that it would be madness to attack them with his wearied and unsupported force, reluctantly ordered a retreat, which he conducted in perfect order and without the loss of a man.

This was Peterborough's only failure; with this exception every one of his plans had proved successful, and he only failed here from trusting for once to the co-operation of his wholly unreliable Spanish allies. After this nothing was done on either side for several weeks.

The campaign had been one of the most extraordinary ever accomplished, and its success was due in no degree to chance, but solely to the ability of Peterborough himself. Wild as many of his schemes appeared they were always planned with the greatest care. He calculated upon almost every possible contingency, and prepared for it. He never entrusted to others that which he could do himself, and he personally commanded every expedition even of the most petty kind.

His extraordinary physical powers of endurance enabled him to support fatigue, and to carry out adventure, which would have prostrated most other men. The highest praise, too, is due to the troops, who proved themselves worthy of such a leader. Their confidence in their chief inspired them with a valour equal to his own. They bore uncomplainingly the greatest hardships and fatigues, and engaged unquestioningly in adventures and exploits against odds which made success appear absolutely hopeless. The hundred and fifty dragoons who followed the Earl of Peterborough to the conquest of Valencia deserve a place side by side with the greatest heroes of antiquity.

CHAPTER XII

Irregular Warfare

FROM the moment that the news of the loss of Barcelona had reached Madrid, Philip of Anjou had laboured strenuously to collect a force sufficient to overwhelm his enemies. He had, moreover, written urgently to Louis XIV for assistance, and although France was at the moment obliged to make strenuous efforts to show a front to Marlborough and his allies, who had already at Blenheim inflicted a disastrous defeat upon her, Louis responded to the appeal. Formidable French armies were assembled at Saragossa and Rousillon, while a fleet of twelve ships of the line, under the command of the Count of Toulouse, sailed to blockade Barcelona, and the Duke of Berwick, one of the ablest generals of the day, was sent to lead the southern army.

In January the French army of Catalonia, under Marshal Tessé, reached Saragossa, where the arrogance and brutality of the marshal soon excited a storm of hatred among the Aragonese. The towns resisted desperately the entry of the French troops; assassinations of officers and men were matters of daily occurrence, and the savage reprisals adopted

by the marshal, instead of subduing, excited the Spaniards to still fiercer resistance. But savage and cruel as was the marshal, he was in no haste to meet the enemy in the field, and Philip, who was with him, had the greatest difficulty in getting him to move forward.

It was in the last week of February that the news reached the Earl of Peterborough that Marshal Tessé had left Saragossa, and was marching towards Lerida. This was two days after the unsuccessful attempt to surprise the enemy's camp near Alcira; and, menaced as Valencia was by a force greatly superior to his own, he could not leave the city, which in his absence would speedily have succumbed to the attack of Las Torres. He walked quickly up and down his room for some minutes and then said:

“Captain Stilwell, I cannot leave here myself, but I will send you to the Marquis of Cifuentes. You have shown the greatest activity and energy with me, and I do not doubt that you will do equally well when acting independently. I will give you a letter to the marquis, saying that you are one of my most trusted and valued officers, and begging him to avail himself to the fullest of your energy and skill. I shall tell him that at present I am tied here, but that when the enemy reach Barcelona I shall at all hazards march hence and take post in their rear and do what I can to prevent their carrying on the siege. In the meantime I beg him to throw every obstacle in the way of their advance, to hold every pass till the last, to hang on their rear,

attack baggage trains, and cut off stragglers. He cannot hope to defeat Tessé, but he may wear out and dispirit his men by constant attacks. You speak Spanish fluently enough now, and will be able to advise and suggest. Remember, every day that Tessé is delayed gives so much time to the king to put Barcelona in a state of defence. With my little force I cannot do much even when I come. The sole hope of Barcelona is to hold out until a fleet arrives from England. If the king would take my advice I will guarantee that he shall be crowned in Madrid in two months; but those pig-headed Germans who surround him set him against every proposition I make. You had better start to-night as soon as it gets dark, and take a mounted guide with you who knows the country thoroughly."

"It will be a change for you, from the pleasures of Valencia to a guerrilla warfare in the mountains in this inclement season, Stilwell," Graham said as they left the general. "I don't think I should care about your mission. I own I have enjoyed myself in Valencia, and I have lost my heart a dozen times since we arrived."

"I have not lost mine at all," Jack said laughing, "and I am sick of all these balls and festivities. I was not brought up to it, you know, and rough as the work may be I shall prefer it to a long stay here."

"Yes," Graham agreed, "I should not care for a long stay, but you may be quite certain the earl will not remain inactive here many weeks. He is waiting to see how things go, and the moment the

game is fairly opened you may be sure he will be on the move."

"Yes, I don't suppose you will be very long after me," Jack said; "still, I am not sorry to go."

At seven o'clock in the evening Jack set out, taking with him two dragoons as orderlies, the earl having suggested that he should do so.

"Always do a thing yourself if it is possible, Captain Stilwell; but there are times when you must be doing something else, and it is as well to have someone that you can rely upon; besides, the orderlies will give you additional importance in the eyes of the peasants. Most of the men have picked up some Spanish, but you had better pick out two of my orderlies who are best up in it."

Jack had spent the afternoon in making a round of calls at the houses where he had been entertained, and after the exchange of adieus, ceremonial speeches, and compliments, he was heartily glad when the gates closed behind him and he set out on his journey. As the road did not pass anywhere near the Spanish camp there was little fear of interruption in the way. The guide led them by little-frequented tracks across the hills, and by morning they were far on their road.

They were frequently obliged to make detours to avoid towns and villages favourable to King Philip. Why one town or village should take one side, and the next the other, was inexplicable to Jack, but it was so, and throughout the country this singular anomaly existed. It could be accounted for by a

variety of causes. A popular mayor or a powerful landed proprietor, whose sympathies were strong with one side or the other, would probably be followed by the townspeople or peasants. The influence of the priests, too, was great, and this also was divided. However it was, the fact remained that, as with Villa-Real and Nules, neighbouring towns were frequently enthusiastically in favour of opposite parties. As Jack had seen all the despatches and letters which poured in to the earl, he knew what were the circumstances which prevailed in every town and village. He knew to what residences of large proprietors he could ride up with an assurance of welcome, and those which must be carefully avoided.

In some parts of the journey, where the general feeling was hostile, Jack adopted the tactics of his general, riding boldly into the village with his two dragoons clattering behind him, summoning the head men before him, and peremptorily ordering that provisions and forage should be got together for the five hundred horsemen who might be expected to come in half an hour. The terror caused by Peterborough's raids was so great that the mere sight of the English uniform was sufficient to ensure obedience, and without any adventure of importance Jack and his companions rode on, until, on the third day after leaving Valencia, they approached Lerida. Groups of armed peasants hurrying in the same direction were now overtaken. These saluted Jack with shouts of welcome, and he learned that, on the previous day, Marshal Tessé with his army had

crossed from Aragon into Catalonia, and that the alarm bells had been rung throughout the district.

From the peasants Jack learned where the Count of Cifuentes would be found. It was in a village among the hills, to the left of the line by which the enemy were advancing. It was towards this place that the peasants were hastening. Jack had frequently met the count at the siege of Barcelona, and had taken a strong liking for the gallant and dashing Spanish nobleman. The village was crowded with peasants armed with all sorts of weapons—rough, hardy, resolute men, determined to defend their country to the last against the invaders. A shout of satisfaction arose as Jack and his two troopers rode in, and at the sound the count himself appeared at the door of the principal house in the village.

“Ah, Señor Stilwell,” he said, “this is an unexpected pleasure. I thought that you were with the earl in Valencia.”

“So I have been, count, but he has sent me hither with a despatch for you, and, as you will see by its contents, places me for a while at your disposal.”

“I am pleased indeed to hear it,” the count said; “but pray, señor——”

“Captain, count,” Jack said with a smile, “for to such rank the earl has been pleased to promote me, as a recognition for such services as I was able to perform in his campaign against Valencia.”

“Ah,” the count said, “you earned it well. Every man in that wonderful force deserved pro-

motion. It was an almost miraculous adventure, and recalled the feats of the Cid. Truly the days of chivalry are not past, your great earl has proved the contrary."

They had now entered the house, and, after pouring out a cup of wine for Jack after the fatigue of his ride, the count opened the despatch of which Jack was the bearer.

"It is well," he said when he had read it. "As you see for yourself I am already preparing to carry out the first part, for the alarm bells have been ringing out from every church tower in this part of Catalonia, and in another twenty-four hours I expect six thousand peasants will be out. But, as the earl says, I have no hope with such levies as these of offering any effectual opposition to the advance of the enemy.

"The Miquelets cannot stand against disciplined troops. They have no confidence in themselves, and a thousand Frenchmen could rout six thousand of them; but as irregulars they can be trusted to fight. You shall give me the advantage of your experience and wide knowledge, and we will dispute every pass, cut off their convoys, and harass them. I warrant that they will have to move as a body, for it will go hard with any party who may be detached from the rest."

"I fear, count, you must not rely in any way upon my knowledge," Jack said. "I am a very young officer, though I have had the good fortune to be promoted to the rank of captain."

"Age goes for nothing in this warfare," the

count said. "The man of seventy and the boy of fifteen who can aim straight from behind a rock are equally welcome. It is not a deep knowledge of military science that will be of any use to us here. What is wanted is a quick eye, a keen spirit, and courage. These I know that you have, or you would never have won the approbation of the Earl of Peterborough, who is, of all men, the best judge on such matters. Now I will order supper to be got ready soon, as it must, I am sure, be long since you had food. While it is being prepared I will, with your permission, go out and inspect the new arrivals. Fortunately, ten days ago, foreseeing that Tessé would probably advance by this line, I sent several wagonloads of provisions to this village, and a store of ammunition."

Jack accompanied the count into the street of the village. The latter went about among the peasants with a kindly word of welcome to each, giving them the cheering news that though the great English general was occupied in Valencia, he had promised that, when the time came, he would come with all haste to the defence of Barcelona, and in the meantime he had sent an officer of his own staff to assist him to lead the noble Catalans in the defence of their country. On the steps of the church the priest, with half a dozen willing assistants, was distributing food from the wagons to the peasants.

"Don't open the ammunition wagon to-night," the count said. "The men must not take as much as they like, but the ammunition must be served out regularly, for a Catalan will never believe that

he has too much powder, and if left alone the first comers would load themselves with it, and the supply would run short before all are provided."

The count then entered the church, where a party of men were occupied in putting down a thick layer of straw. Here as many as could find room were to sleep, the others sheltering in the houses and barns, for the nights were still very cold among the hills. Having seen that all was going on well, the count returned to his quarters, where a room had been assigned to Jack's two dragoons, and the sound of loud laughter from within showed that they were making themselves at home with the inmates.

A well-cooked repast was soon on the table, and to this Jack and his host did full justice.

"This wine is excellent; surely it does not grow on these hills?"

"No," the count said laughing. "I am ready to run the risk of being killed, but I do not want to be poisoned, so I sent up a score or two of flasks from my own cellars. The vineyards of Cifuentes are reckoned among the first in this part of Spain. And now," he said, when they had finished and the table had been cleared, "we will take a look at the map and talk over our plans. The enemy leave Lerida to-morrow. I have already ordered that the whole country along their line of march shall be wasted, that all stores of corn, wine, and forage which cannot be carried off shall be destroyed, and that every horse and every head of cattle shall be

driven away. I have also ordered the wells to be poisoned."

Jack looked grave. "I own that I don't like that," he said.

"I do not like it myself," the count replied; "but if an enemy invades your country you must oppose him by all means. Water is one of the necessities of life, and as one can't carry off the wells one must render them useless; but I don't wish to kill in this way, and have given strict orders that in every case where poison is used, a placard, with a notice that it has been done, shall be affixed to the wells."

"In that case," Jack said, "I quite approve of what you have done, count; the wells then simply cease to exist as sources of supply."

"I wish I could poison all the running streams too," the count said; "but unfortunately they are beyond us, and there are so many little streams caused by the melting snow on the hills that I fear we shall not be able greatly to straiten the enemy. At daybreak to-morrow I will mount with you, and we will ride some twenty miles along the road and select the spots where a sturdy resistance can best be made. By the time we get back here most of the peasants who are coming will have assembled. These we will form into bands, some to hold the passes and to dispute the advance, others to hang upon the skirts and annoy them incessantly, some to close in behind, cut off wagons that break down or lag by the way, and to prevent, if possible, any convoys from the rear from joining them."

This programme was carried out. Several spots were settled on where an irregular force could oppose a stout resistance to trained troops, and points were fixed upon where breastworks should be thrown up, walls utilized, and houses loopholed and placed in a state of defence.

It was late in the afternoon before they rode again into the village. The gathering of peasants was now very largely increased, and extended over the fields for some distance round the place. The count at once gave orders that all should form up in regular order according to the villages from which they came. When this was done he divided them into four groups.

The first, 2000 strong, was intended to hold the passes; two others, each 1000 strong, were to operate upon the flanks of the enemy; and a fourth, of the same strength, to act in its rear.

"Now, Captain Stilwell," he said, "will you take the command of whichever of these bodies you choose?"

"I thank you, count, for the offer," Jack said, "but I will take no command whatever. In the first place, your Catalans would very strongly object to being led by a foreigner, especially by one so young and unknown as myself. In the second place, I would rather, with your permission, remain by your side. You will naturally command the force that opposes the direct attack, and, as the bulk of the fighting will fall on them, I should prefer being there. I will act as your lieutenant."

"Well, since you choose it, perhaps it is best

so," the count said. "These peasants fight best their own way. They are given to sudden retreats, but they rally quickly and return again to the fight, and they will probably fight better under their own local leaders than under a stranger. You will see they have no idea of fighting in a body; the men of each village will fight together and act independently of the rest. Many of them, you see, are headed by priests, not a few of whom have brought rifles with them. These will generally lead their own villagers, and their authority is far greater than that which any layman could obtain over them. I must appoint a leader to each body to direct their general movements; the village chiefs will do the rest."

While the count had been absent several other gentlemen of good family had arrived in the village, some marching in with the peasants on their estates. Three of these were appointed to lead the three bands destined for the flank and rear attacks. The next three hours were devoted to the distribution of provisions and ammunition, each man taking four days' supply of the former and receiving sufficient powder and bullets for forty rounds of the latter. All were ordered to be in readiness to march two hours before daybreak.

The count then retired to his quarters, and there pointed out on the map, to the three divisional leaders, the spots where he intended to make a stand, and gave them instructions as to their respective shares of the operations. Their orders were very general. They were to post their men

on the side hills, and as much behind cover as possible, to keep up a galling fire at the column, occasionally to show in threatening masses as if about to charge down, so as to cause as much alarm and confusion as possible, and, should at any point the nature of the ground favour it, they were to dash down upon the baggage train and to hamstring the horses, smash the wheels, and create as much damage as they could, and to fall back upon the approach of a strong body of the enemy. Those in the rear were to press closely up so as to necessitate a strong force being kept there to oppose them. But their principal duties were to hold the passes, and to prevent any convoys, unless very strongly guarded, from reaching the enemy from his base at Saragossa.

After these instructions had been given supper was spread, and some fifteen or twenty of the principal persons who had joined were invited by the count, and a pleasant evening was spent.

It was interesting to Jack to observe the difference between this gathering and that which had taken place in the Earl of Peterborough's quarters on the evening before the attack on San Matteo. There, although many considered that the prospects of success on the following day were slight indeed, all was merriment and mirth. The whole party were in the highest spirits, and the brilliant wit of the earl, and his reckless spirit of fun, had kept the party in continual laughter.

The tone on the contrary at the present gathering was quiet and almost stiff. These grave Catalan

nobles, fresh from their country estates, contrasted strongly with the more lively and joyous inhabitants of Valencia. Each addressed the other with ceremony, and listened with grave attention to the remarks of each speaker in turn.

During the whole evening nothing approaching to a joke was made, there was scarcely a smile upon the countenance of any present; and yet the tone of courtliness and deference to the opinions of each other, the grave politeness, the pride with which each spoke of his country, their enthusiasm in the cause, and the hatred with which they spoke of the enemy, impressed Jack very favourably; and though, as he said to himself when thinking it over, the evening had certainly not been a lively one, it had by no means been unpleasant.

Two hours before daybreak the bell of the church gave the signal. As the men had only to rise to their feet, shake themselves, take up their arms, and sling their bags of provisions round their necks, it was but a few minutes before they were formed up in order. The count saw the three divisions file off silently in the darkness, and then, placing himself at the head of the main body, led the way towards the spot which he and Jack had selected for opposing the march of Tessé's invading column.

Daylight was just breaking when they reached it, and the count ordered the men to pile their arms and at once to set to work. The road, which had been winding along in a valley, here mounted a sharp rise, on the very brow of which stood a

hamlet of some twenty houses. It had already been deserted by the inhabitants, and the houses were taken possession of by the workers. Those facing the brow of the hill were loopholed, as were the walls along the same line. Men were set to work to build a great barricade across the road, and to run breastworks of stones right and left from the points where the walls ended along the brow. Other parties loopholed the houses and walls of the village, and formed another barricade across the road at the other end. With two thousand men at work these tasks were soon carried out; and the count then led the men down the hill, whose face was covered with loose stones, and set them to work piling these in lines one above another.

At ten o'clock in the morning the work was complete. The count told the men off by parties, each of which were to hold one of the lines of stones; each party was, as the French charged, to retire up the hill and join that at the line above, so that their resistance would become more and more obstinate till the village itself was reached. Here a stand was to be made as long as possible. If the column advanced only by the road, every house was to be held; if they spread out in line so as to overlap the village on both sides, a rapid retreat was to be made when the bugler by the count's side gave the signal.

The men sat down to breakfast in their allotted places, quiet, grave, and stern; and again the contrast with the laughter and high spirits which prevail among English soldiers, when fighting is expected, struck Jack very forcibly.

"They would make grand soldiers if properly trained, these grave earnest-looking men," he said to himself. "They look as if they could endure any amount of fatigue and hardship; and although they don't take things in the same cheerful light our men do, no one can doubt their courage. I can quite understand now the fact that the Spanish infantry was once considered the finest in Europe. If they only had leaders and discipline Spain would not want any foreign aid, her own people would be more than a match for any army the French could send across the northern frontier."

The meal was scarcely finished when, at the end of the valley, some three miles away, a cloud of dust was seen to rise with the sparkle of the sun on arms and accoutrements.

"There are Tessé's cavalry!" the count exclaimed. "Another half-hour will cause a transformation in this quiet valley."

The head of the column came on but slowly, the cavalry regiment forming it accommodating their pace to that of the infantry and baggage wagons in the rear. Slowly they moved on, until the bottom of the valley appeared covered with a moving mass extending from the end, three miles away, to within half a mile of the foot of the hill on which the Spaniards were posted. Suddenly from the hill-sides on the left puffs of smoke darted out, and instantly a similar fire was opened on the right.

"They are at work at last," Jack exclaimed as the rattle of musketry sounded loud and continuous. "I wondered when they were going to begin."

"I told them to let the column pass nearly to the head of the valley before they opened fire," the count said. "Had they begun soon after the enemy entered the valley, they would have left all their baggage behind under a guard, and the infantry would have been free to attack the hills at once. Now they are all crowded up in the valley—horse, foot, and baggage. The wounded horses will become unmanageable, and there is sure to be confusion, though perhaps not panic. See, they are answering our fire! They might as well save their powder, for they are only throwing away ammunition by firing away at the hillside."

This indeed was the case; for Jack, although in the course of the morning he had frequently watched the hillside for signs of the other parties, had not made out the slightest movement, so completely were the men hidden behind rocks and bushes.

Strong bodies of infantry were thrown out by Tessé on both flanks, and these began to climb the hills, keeping up a heavy fire at their concealed foe, while the main column continued its way.

Not a shot was fired by the Spanish until the head of the column was within a hundred yards of the foot of the rise, and then from the whole face of the hill a heavy fire was opened. The enemy recoiled, and for a time there was great confusion near the head of the column; an officer of high rank dashed up, and the troops formed out into a line across the whole width of the valley and then moved forward steadily; so heavy were

their losses, however, that they presently came to a standstill. But reinforcements coming up, they again pressed forward, firing as they went.

Not until they were within twenty yards did the Miquelets lining the lower wall of rocks leave their post, and, covered by the smoke, gain with little loss the line next above them. Slowly the enemy won their way uphill, suffering heavily as they did so, and continually being reinforced from the rear. At the last wall the peasants, gathered now together, maintained a long resistance; and it was not until fully four thousand of the enemy were brought up that the position was seriously threatened. Then their leader, seeing that they would sustain very heavy loss if the enemy carried the wall by assault, ordered his trumpeter to sound the retreat. It was at once obeyed, and by the time the French had crossed the wall the peasants had already passed out at the other end of the village.

As the French cavalry had not been able to pass the lower walls there was no pursuit. The peasants rallied after a rapid flight of a mile. Their loss had been small, while that of the French had been very considerable; and the marshal halted his troops round the village for the day.

The result of the fighting added to the resolution of the peasants, and as soon as the French continued their route the next morning the fighting began again. It was a repetition of that of the preceding day. The enemy had to contest every foot of the ground, and were exposed to a galling

fire along the whole line of their march. Many times they made desperate efforts to drive the peasants from the hillsides; sometimes they were beaten back with heavy loss, and when they succeeded it was only to find the positions they attacked deserted and their active defenders already beyond musket fire. At night they had no respite; the enemy swarmed round their camp, shot down the sentries, and attacked with such boldness that the marshal was obliged to keep a large number of his men constantly under arms.

At last, worn out by fatigue and fighting, the weary army emerged from the hills into the wide valleys, where their cavalry were able to act, and the ground no longer offered favourable positions of defence to the peasantry. Seeing the uselessness of further attacks, the Count of Cifuentes drew off his peasants; and Tessé marched on to Barcelona and effected a junction with the troops from Roussillon under the Duke de Noailles, who had come down by the way of Gerona. The town was at once invested on the land side; while the Count of Toulouse, with thirty French ships, blockaded it from the sea.

CHAPTER XIII

The French Convoy

A REPORT having arrived at the camp of the Count of Cifuentes that the peasants around Saragossa had risen in insurrection, Jack thought that he should be doing more good by discovering the truth of the rumour, and by keeping the earl informed of the state of things in the enemy's rear, than by remaining with the count. He hesitated whether he should take his two orderlies with him, but as they were well mounted he decided that they should accompany him, as they would add to his authority, and would, in case of need, enable him the better to assume the position of an officer riding in advance of a considerable force.

After a hearty adieu from the Count of Cifuentes, he started soon after daybreak. After riding for some hours, just as he reached the top of a rise, up which he had walked his horse, one of the orderlies, who were riding a few paces behind him, rode up.

"I think, Captain Stilwell," he said, "I hear the sound of firing. Brown thinks he hears it too."

Jack reined in his horse.

"I hear nothing," he said, after a pause of a minute.

"I don't hear it now, sir," the man said. "I think it came down on a puff of wind. If you wait a minute or two I think you will hear it."

Jack waited another two minutes, and then was about to resume his journey, when suddenly a faint sound came upon the wind.

"You are right, Thompson," he exclaimed, "that's firing, sure enough. It must be a convoy attacked by peasants."

He touched his horse with the spur and galloped forward. Two miles farther on, crossing the brow, they saw, half a mile ahead of them in the dip of the valley, a number of wagons huddled together. On either side of the road men were lying, and the spurts of smoke that rose from these, as well as from the wagons, proved that they were still stoutly defending themselves. A light smoke rose from every bush and rock on the hillsides around, showing how numerous were the assailants. Leaving the road, Jack galloped towards the hill. Presently several balls came singing round them.

"They think we are French, sir," one of the troopers said. "I guess they don't know much about uniforms."

Jack drew out a white handkerchief and waved it as he rode forward, shouting as he did: "English, English." The fire ceased, and the little party soon reached the spot where the peasants were lying thickly in their ambushes.

"I am an English officer," Jack said as he leapt from his horse. "Where is your leader?"

"There is one of them," a peasant said, pointing to a priest, who, with a long musket in his hand, rose from behind a log.

"Reverend father," Jack said, "I have come from the Earl of Peterborough with a mission to understand how matters go in Arragon, and to ascertain what force would be likely to join him in this province against the invader."

"You see for yourself how things go," the priest said. "I am glad to see an officer of the great Earl of Peterborough, whose exploits have excited the admiration of all Spain. To whom have I the honour of speaking?"

"I am Captain Stilwell, one of the earl's aides-de-camp; and you, father?"

"I am Ignacio Bravos, the humble padre of the village of San Aldephonso. And now, Captain Stilwell, if you will excuse me till we make an end of these accursed Frenchmen, afterwards I will be at your service."

For another two hours the conflict continued. Jack saw that the fire of the defenders of the wagons was decreasing, and he was not surprised when a white handkerchief was raised on the top of a bayonet and waved in the air in token of a desire to parley. A shout of exultation rose from the Spaniards. The priest showed himself on the hillside.

"Do you surrender?" he shouted.

"We surrender the wagons," an officer called

back, "on condition that we are allowed to march off with our arms without molestation."

A shout of refusal rose from the peasants, and the firing was instantly renewed. Jack went and sat down by the side of the priest.

"Father," he said, "it were best to give these men the terms they ask. War is not massacre."

"Quite so, my son," the priest replied coolly. "That is what you should have told Marshal Tessé. It is he who has chosen to make it massacre. Why, man, he has shot and hung hundreds in cold blood in and around Saragossa, has burnt numerous villages in the neighbourhood, and put man, woman, and child to the sword."

"Then, if this be so, father, I should say, by all means hang Marshal Tessé when you catch him, but do not punish the innocent for the guilty. You must remember that these men have been taken away from their homes in France, and forced to fight in quarrels in which they have no concern. Like yourself, they are Catholics. Above all, remember how many scores of villages are at present at the mercy of the French. If the news comes to the marshal that you have refused quarter to his soldiers, he will have a fair excuse for taking vengeance on such of your countrymen as may be in his power."

"There is something in that," the priest said. "For myself I have no pity, not a scrap of it, for these Frenchmen, nor would you have, had you seen as much of their doings as I have, nor do I think that any retribution that we might deal

out to the men could increase Tessé's hatred and ferocity towards us."

"Still, it might serve as an excuse," Jack urged. "Remember the eyes of Europe are upon this struggle, and that the report of wholesale slaughter of your enemies will not influence public opinion in your favour."

"Public opinion goes for nothing," the priest said shortly.

"Pardon me, father," Jack replied. "The English and Dutch and the Duke of Savoy are all fighting in your favour, and we may even boast that had it not been for the Earl of Peterborough and the allies the chains of France would be riveted firmly round your necks. You will tell me, no doubt, that they are fighting for their own political ends, and from no true love for the Spanish people. That may be so, but you must remember that although governments begin wars it is the people who carry them on. Let the people of England and Holland hear, as they will hear, of the brutal ferocity of the French marshal on a defenceless people, and their sympathies will be strongly with you. They will urge their governments to action, and vote willingly the necessary sums for carrying on the war. Let them hear that with you too war is massacre, that you take no prisoners, and kill all that fall into your hands, and, believe me, the public will soon grow sick of the war carried on with such cruelty on both sides."

"You are right, my son," the priest said frankly. "Young as you are, you have seen more of the

world than I, who, since I left the University of Salamanca, have never been ten miles from my native village. I will do what I can to put a stop to this matter. But I am not solely in command here. I lead my own village, but there are the men of a score of villages lying on these hills. But I will summon all the chiefs to a council now."

The priest called half a dozen of the peasants to him, and despatched them with orders to bring all the other leaders to take part in a council with an English officer who had arrived from the great Earl of Peterborough.

In half an hour some twenty men were assembled in a little hollow on the hillside, where they were sheltered from the fire of the French. Four or five of these were priests. There were two or three innkeepers. The remainder were small landed proprietors. Father Ignacio first addressed them. He stated that the English officer had come on a mission from the earl, and had arrived accidentally while the fight was going on, and that he was of opinion that the French offer of surrender should be accepted. A murmur of dissent went round the circle.

"I was at first of your opinion," the priest said, "but the reasons which this English officer has given me in support of his advice have brought me round to his way of thinking. I will leave him to state them to you."

Jack now rose to his feet, and repeated the arguments which he had used to the priest. He

gathered from the faces of his hearers that, although some were convinced that mercy would be the best policy, others were still bent upon revenge. Father Ignacio then, in language which he thought best suited to touch his hearers, repeated Jack's arguments, urging very strongly the vengeance which the French marshal would be sure to take upon the Spanish population of the country through which he was passing when he heard the news.

"Besides," Jack said, when he had finished, "you must remember you have not conquered the enemy yet. I see the officer has withdrawn all his men among the wagons, where their shelter will be nearly as good as yours. They have, doubtless, abundant stores of ammunition in those wagons, together with food and wine, and if you force them to fight to the last man they can hold out for a very long time, and will inflict a heavy loss upon your men before they are overcome."

"But why should they take their weapons with them?" one of the men said; "they will be useful to us. Why should we let them carry them away to kill more Spaniards?"

"The reason why I would let them take their arms is this," Jack said. "Unless they march away armed you will not be able to restrain your followers, who will be likely to break any convention you may make and to massacre them without mercy. As to the arms being used again against you, I will put the officers under their parole that they and their men shall not take any further part



“‘DO YOU SURRENDER?’ HE SHOUTED”

in the war until they are exchanged for an equal number of prisoners taken by the French."

"Who would trust to a Frenchman's word?" a man asked scoffingly.

"I would trust to a French officer's word as much as to that of an English officer," Jack replied. "You would expect them to trust to your word that they should be safe if they laid down their arms; and yet, as you know, you might not be able to keep it? Better a thousand times that a handful of French officers and men should be allowed to join the enemy's ranks than that the national honour of Spain should be soiled by a massacre perpetrated just after a surrender."

"The Englishman is right," Father Ignacio said positively. "Let us waste no further words on it. Besides, I have a reason of my own. I started before daybreak without breakfast, and have got nothing but a piece of dry bread with me. If we don't accept these fellows' surrender we may be on the hillside all night, and I told my servant that I should have a larded capon and a flask of my best wine for dinner. That is an argument, my sons, which I am sure comes home to you all; and remember, if we accept the surrender we shall soon quench our thirst on the good wine which, I doubt not, is contained in some of the barrels I see down yonder."

There was a hearty laugh and the question was settled; and it was arranged at once that Father Ignacio, one of the other leaders, and Jack should treat with the enemy. The other leaders hurried

away to their respective sections to order them to cease firing when a white flag was raised; and, having given them twenty minutes to get to their several posts, a white handkerchief was waved in the air. The Spanish fire ceased at once, and as soon as the French perceived the flag they also stopped firing.

"We are coming down, three of us, to discuss matters with you," Father Ignacio shouted out.

The three accordingly descended the hill, and when within a short distance of the wagons were met by the officer in command of the convoy and two others.

"We have come to discuss the terms of your surrender," Jack said. "I am Captain Stilwell, one of Lord Peterborough's aides-de-camp. You see your position is desperate."

"Not quite desperate," the French officer replied; "we have plenty of ammunition and abundance of provisions, and can hold out for a long time, till rescue comes."

"There is little chance of rescue," Jack said. "Your marshal has his hands full where he is; and even did he hear of your situation and detach a force back to your rescue, neither of which he is likely to do, that force would have to fight every foot of its way, and assuredly not arrive in time. Nor is there any more chance of your receiving succour from the rear. You have made a gallant defence, sir, and might perhaps hold out for many hours yet; but of what use is it sacrificing the lives of your men in a vain resistance?"

“What is your proposal?” the officer asked.

“We propose,” Jack said, “to allow you to march out with your arms and five rounds of ammunition to each man, on you and your officers giving me your parole to consider yourselves and your men as prisoners of war, and not to serve again until exchanged.”

The terms were far better than the French officer had looked for.

“I may tell you,” Father Ignacio said, “that for these terms you are indebted solely to this English officer. Had it depended upon us only, rest assured that no one of you would have gone away alive.”

“You will understand,” Jack said, “that you will be allowed to take your arms solely as a protection against the peasants, who have been justly enraged by the brutal atrocities of your general. You know well that even could their leaders here obtain from their followers a respect for the terms of surrender, that your men would be massacred in the first village through which they passed were they deprived of their arms. My friends here are desirous that no stigma of massacre shall rest upon the Spanish honour, and they have therefore agreed to allow your men to keep their arms for purposes of defence on their return march.”

After a few words with his fellow officers the commander of the convoy agreed to the terms. “You will, however,” he said, “permit me to take with me one or more wagons, as may be required, to carry off my wounded?”

This was at once agreed to, and in ten minutes

the two companies of French infantry were in readiness to march. There were forty wounded in the wagons, and seven-and-twenty dead were left behind them. The French officer in command, before marching off, thanked Jack very heartily for his interference on their behalf.

"I tell you frankly, Captain Stilwell," he said, "that I had no hopes whatever that I or any of my men would leave the ground alive, for these Spaniards invariably massacre prisoners who fall into their hands. I could not have left my wounded behind me; and even if I had resolved to do so, the chances of our fighting our way back in safety would have been small indeed. We owe you our lives, sir; and should it ever be in the power of Major Ferré to repay the debt, you may rely upon me."

"I trust that the fortune of war may never place me in a position when I may need to recall your promise," Jack said, smiling; "but should it do so, I will not fail to remind you if I get a chance."

All was now ready for the march. Two wagons which had been hastily emptied were, with the wounded men, placed in the centre, and the French, numbering now less than a hundred, started on their march. The Spanish peasants remained in their places on the hillside till they had departed, as the leaders had agreed that it was better they should be kept away from the vicinity of the French, as a quarrel would be certain to take place did they come to close quarters. The peasants were indignant at what they deemed the escape of their enemies; but the desire of plunder soon over-

came other considerations, and as soon as the French had marched off they poured down from the hills. Their leaders, however, restrained them from indiscriminate plundering. There were in all eighty-seven wagons loaded with wine, corn, flour, and provisions for the use of the army.

An equal division was made of these among the various bands of peasants in proportion to their strength. A few casks of wine were broached. The peasants then buried their own dead—who were very few in number, so securely had they been sheltered in their hiding places—and then the force broke up, each party marching with its proportion of wagons back to its village.

“Now, Señor Capitano,” Father Ignacio said, “I trust that you will come home with me. My village is six miles away, and I will do my best to make you comfortable. Hitherto you have seen me only as a man of war. I can assure you that I am much more estimable in my proper character as a man of peace. And let me tell you, my cook is excellent; the wine of the village is famous in the province, and I have some in my cellars ten years old.”

“I cannot resist such a number of good arguments,” Jack said, smiling, “and till to-morrow morning I am at your service; but I warn you that my appetite just at present is ravenous, and that my two dragoons are likely to make a serious in-road upon the larders of your village, however well supplied.”

“They will be welcome,” the priest said, “and

I guarantee the larders will prove sufficiently well stocked. Fortunately, although nearly every village in the neighbourhood has been raided by the French, owing to our good fortune and the interposition of the blessed San Aldephonso our village has escaped a visit."

The party under Father Ignacio soon turned off from the main road, and, with the six wagons which fell to their share, journeyed along a rough country road until they reached the village. Father Ignacio sat on the leading wagon, and Jack rode alongside chatting with him. The priest was a stout-built man, with a good-humoured countenance and merry twinkle of the eye, and Jack wondered what could have been the special wrong that induced him to take up a musket and lead his flock to the attack of a French convoy.

"Katherine!" he shouted as the wagon stopped in front of his house and a buxom serving-woman appeared at the door, "dinner as quickly as possible, for we are starving; and let it be not only quick but plentiful. Lay a cover for this gentleman, who will dine with me; and prepare an ample supply of food in the kitchen for these two English soldiers, who have come across the sea to fight for the good cause.

"And now," he said to Jack, "while dinner is preparing I must distribute the spoil." The wagons were unloaded and their contents divided among the men who had taken part in the expedition, his flock insisting upon the padre taking a bountiful share.

The mules and bullocks in the wagons were similarly divided, in this case one being given to each family; for there were but thirty animals, while the fighting contingent from the village had numbered nearly eighty men. There were five or six animals over when the division had been made; and these were given, in addition to their proper share, to the families of three men who had been killed in the fight.

"Now, my sons," the padre said when all was done, "take your axes and fall upon the wagons. A wagon is a thing to swear by. Every man knows his own goods; and should the French ever visit our village again these wagons might cost us dear. Therefore let them be made into firewood as quickly as possible, and let them all be consumed before other fuel is touched. And now, capitano, I think that Katherine will be ready for us."

So saying he led the way back into his house. A capital meal was provided, and Jack found that the priest had by no means overpraised either his cook or his cellar. After the meal was over and the two had drawn their chairs up to the hearth, on which was blazing brightly some wood which Jack recognized as forming part of one of the wagons, and the priest had placed on a small table close at hand a large flask which he had himself gone into the cellar to fetch, Jack said:

"How is it, father, that, as you told me, you have seen such acts of brutality on the part of the

French as to cause you to wage a war without mercy against them, when, as you say, they have never penetrated to your village? Your reasons must be strong, for your profession is a peaceful one. You do not look like a man who would rush into deeds of violence for their own sake, and your cook and your cellar offer you strong inducements to remain at home."

"That is so, my son," the priest said with a laugh. "I am, as you may see, an easygoing man, well contented with my lot, and envy not the Bishop of Toledo; but you know it is said that even a worm will turn, and so you have seen the peaceful priest enacting the part of the bloodthirsty captain. But, my son"—and his face grew grave now—"you can little imagine the deeds which the ferocious Tessé has enacted here in Arragon. When warring with you English the French behave like a civilized nation; when warring with us Spanish peasants, who have no means of making our wrongs known to the world, they behave worse than a horde of brutal savages. But I will tell you the circumstances which have driven me to place myself at the head of my parishioners, to wage a war of extermination with the French, and to deny mercy to every one of that accursed nation who may fall into my hands. I have a brother—or rather I should say I had one—a well-to-do farmer who lived at a village some six miles from Saragossa. He had an only daughter, who was to be married to the son of a neighbouring proprietor. A handsome, high-spirited lad he was, and devoted

to Nina. They were to have been married some three months ago, and they wrote to me to go over to perform the ceremony.

"I went; the wedding day arrived, and all was ready. It was a holiday in the village, for both were favourites. The bride was dressed; the village maidens and men were all in their best; the procession was about to set out, when a troop of dragoons rode suddenly in from Saragossa. A shot or two had been fired at them as they rode through a wood. When they arrived they dismounted, and the commander ordered the principal men of the village to be brought to him. My brother and the father of the bridegroom were among them.

"'My troops have been fired at,' the Frenchman said, 'and I hold you responsible.'

"'It was no one from this village,' my brother said; 'we have a wedding here, and not a soul is absent.'

"'I care not,' the officer said; 'we have been fired at, and we shall give the people of this district a lesson.'

"So without another word he turned to his soldiers and ordered them to fire the village from end to end.

"'It is outrageous,' my brother said, and the others joined him in the cry. I, too, implored him to pause before having such an order carried into execution. His only reply was to give the order to his men.

"The six principal men were seized at once,

were set with their backs against the wall of a house, and shot."

"You cannot mean it!" Jack exclaimed indignantly. "Surely such an outrage could never be perpetrated by civilized soldiers?"

"I saw it done," the priest said bitterly. "I tried to throw myself between the victims and their murderers, but I was held back by force by the soldiers. Imagine the scene if you can—the screaming women, the outburst of vain fury among the men. The bridegroom, in his despair at seeing his father murdered, seized a stick and rushed at the French officer; but he, drawing a pistol, shot him dead, and the soldiers poured a volley into his companions, killing some eight or ten others. Resistance was hopeless. Those who were unwounded fled; those who fell were bayoneted on the spot. I took my niece's arm and led her quietly away. Even the French soldiers drew back before us. You should have seen her face. Madre de Dios! I see it now—I see it always. She died that night. Not one word passed her lips from the moment when her father and her affianced husband fell dead before her eyes. An hour later the troop rode off, and the people stole back to bury their dead among the ashes of what had been their homes. I went to Saragossa after reading the funeral service over them. I saw Tessé and told him of the scene I had witnessed, and demanded vengeance. He laughed in my face. Señor, I persisted, and he got angry and told me that, were it not for my cloth, he would hang me from the

steeple. I called down Heaven's curse upon him, and left him and came home. Do you wonder, señor, that I found it hard to spare those Frenchmen for whom you pleaded? Do you wonder that I, a man of peace, lead out my villagers to slaughter our enemy?"

"I do not, indeed!" Jack exclaimed warmly. "Such acts as these would stir the blood of the coldest into fire; and, priest or no priest, a man would be less than a man who did not try to take vengeance for so foul a deed. Have many massacres of this sort been perpetrated?"

"Many," the priest replied, "and in no case has any redress been obtained by the relatives of the victims."

"And throughout all Arragon, does the same hatred of the French prevail?"

"Everywhere," the priest said.

"Then King Charles would meet with an enthusiastic welcome here?"

"I do not say that," the priest answered. "He would be well received, doubtless, simply because he is the enemy of the French; but for himself, no. We Arragonese cannot for the life of us see why we should be ruled over by a foreigner; and in some respects a German king is even less to be desired than a French one. The connection between the two Latin nations is naturally closer than between us and the Germans, and a French king would more readily adapt himself to our ways than would a stiff and thick-headed German."

"Apart from the recent doings of the French

army Arragon would have preferred Philip to Charles. Moreover, Charles is looked upon as the choice of the Catalans and Valencians, and why should the men of Arragon take the king others have chosen? No, King Charles will doubtless be received well because he appears as the enemy of the French; but you will not find that the people of Arragon will make any great sacrifices in his behalf. Let a French army enter our province again, every man will rise in arms against it; but there will be little disposition to raise troops to follow King Charles beyond the limits of the province. Castille is strong for Philip; the jealousy there of the Catalans is even greater than here, and the fact that Arragon will go with Catalonia and Valencia will only render the Castillians more earnest in the cause of Philip. There have been several skirmishes already between bands of our Miquelets and those of Castille, and the whole country along the border is greatly disturbed."

"It is a pity that Spaniards cannot agree among themselves as to who shall be king."

"Ah, my son; but it will be very long yet before Spaniards agree upon any point. It is a mistake to think of us as one nation. We are half a dozen nations under one king. If you are asked your nationality, you reply an Englishman. If you ask a Spaniard, he will reply, I am a Castillian, or a Catalan, an Arragonese or Biscayan—never, I am a Spaniard. We hate each other as you Scotchmen and Englishmen hated each other a hundred years back, and even now regard yourselves as different

peoples. What connection is there between the hardy mountaineer of the northern provinces and the easygoing peasant of Valencia or Andalusia? Nothing. Consequently, if one part of Spain declares for one man as a king, you may be sure that the other will declare against him.

“As long as we had great men, Spaniards, for our kings—and the descent went in the regular way from father to son—things went smoothly, because no pretender could have a shadow of claim. As between two foreign princes, each man has a right to choose for himself. Were there any Spaniard with a shadow of claim, all parties would rally round him; but, unfortunately, this is not so; and I foresee an epoch of war and trouble before the matter is settled. For myself, I tell you I would not give that flask of wine were I able to put the crown upon the head of one or other of these foreigners. Let whoever gets the crown govern well and strongly, tax my villagers lightly, and interfere in no way with our privileges, and I shall be well content, and such you will find is the opinion of most men in Spain. And now, tell me if there is ought that I can do for you. You say you must be on your way by daybreak. Tell me in which direction you journey, and it will be hard if I cannot find a friend there with whom my introduction will ensure you a hearty welcome.”

“If you can tell me where are the largest gatherings of Miquelets, I can tell you which way I shall ride,” Jack replied. “My mission is to ascertain what aid the king can rely upon in this province.”

"Three days ago there were many thousands of men under arms," the priest replied; "by to-night there will be less than as many hundreds. The day Tessé crossed the frontier with his army the greater portion of the bands went to their homes, and their arms will be laid aside until the news comes that the French army is on its return from Barcelona. I fancy there is but little chance of our seeing King Charles among us. In another day or two Tessé will be before Barcelona; and joined, as he will be there, by the French army marching down from Roussillon, he will make quick work of that town, and King Charles will have the choice of going to Valencia to be hunted shortly thence, or of sailing away again from the country in your ships."

"It would seem like it," Jack agreed; "but you are reckoning without the Earl of Peterborough."

"Your English general must be a wonder," the priest said, "a marvel; but he cannot accomplish impossibilities. What can he do with two or three thousand trained troops against twenty thousand veteran French soldiers?"

"I cannot tell what he will do," Jack laughed; "but you may rely upon it that he will do something, and I would take fair odds that he will somehow or other save Barcelona and rid Catalonia of its invaders."

"That I judge to be altogether impossible," the priest replied. "Anything that man could do I am ready to admit that your general is capable of; but I do not judge this to be within the range of possi-

bilities. If you will take my advice, my son, you will not linger here, but will ride for Valencia and embark on board your ships with him when the time comes."

"We shall see," Jack said laughing. "I have faith in the improbable. It may not be so very long before I drop in again to drink another flask of your wine on my way through Arragon with King Charles on his march towards Madrid."

"If you do, my son, I will produce a bottle of wine to which this is but ditchwater. I have three or four stored away in my cellar which I preserve for great occasions. They are the remains of the cellar of my predecessor, as good a judge of wine as ever lived. It is forty years since he laid them by, and they were, he said, the best vintage he had ever come across. Had the good old man died ten years earlier, what a heritage would have been mine! but in his later years he was not so saving as it behoves a good man to be, and indulged in them on minor occasions; consequently, but two dozen remained when I succeeded to the charge twenty years ago. I, too, was not sufficiently chary of them to begin with, and all but six bottles were drunk in the first ten years. Since then I have been as stingy as a miser, and but two bottles have been opened."

"I hope, father, that you have laid in a similar supply for whomsoever may come after you."

"Surely I have, my son. Fifteen years ago I had a hogshead of the primest vintage in the neighbourhood bricked up in my cellar. I had an inscription

placed on the wall by which, should I be taken suddenly, my successor may know of the store that awaits him. At present you would not find the inscription did you search for it; for, when those troubles began, I filled up the letters in the stone with mortar, and gave the wall two or three coats of whitewash. I did not choose to run any risk of my grand wine going down the throats of thirsty French soldiers. It would be an act of sacrilege. When matters are settled, and we are at peace again, I will pick out the mortar from the letters; but not till then. I have often reflected since how shortsighted it was not to have stowed away another hogshead for my own consumption. It would have been something to have looked forward to in my declining years."

"Ah, father, who knows what may happen before that? The wall may fall down, and then naturally you would wish to see whether the wine is in as good a condition as it should be. Besides, you will say to yourself, why, when my successor left me but a miserable two dozen of that grand wine of his, should I bequeath a whole hogshead to him who may come after me, and who, moreover, may be so bad a judge of wine that he will value my treasure no more than an equal quantity of the rough country vintage?"

"Avaunt, tempter!" the priest said laughing. "But," he added, more seriously, "you have frightened me. I never thought of that. I have always pictured my successor as a man who would appreciate good wine as I do myself. Truly, it

would be a terrible misfortune did he not do so—a veritable throwing of pearls before swine. Now that you have presented this dreadful idea, it will be ever in my mind. I shall no longer think of my hogshead with unmixed satisfaction.”

“The idea is a terrible one, truly,” Jack said gravely, “and to prevent it I would advise you when the time of peace arrives to open your cave, to bottle off your wine, and to secure its being appreciated by indulging in it yourself on special occasions and holidays, taking care always to leave a store equal to, or even superior to, that which you yourself inherited.”

“I will think it over, my son, and it may be that I shall take your advice. Such a misfortune as that which you have suggested is too terrible to think of.”

“It is so, father, terrible indeed; and I feel confident that you will do the best in your power to prevent the possibility of its occurrence. Besides, you know, wine may be kept even too long. I judge you not to be more than five-and-forty now; with so good a cook and so good a cellar you may reasonably expect to live to the age of eighty; there is, therefore, plenty of time for you to lay in another hogshead to mature for your successor.”

The priest burst out into a roar of laughter, in which Jack joined him.

“Your reasoning powers are admirable,” he said when he recovered his gravity, “and you have completely convinced me. An hour ago if it had been suggested to me that I should open that cellar

I should have viewed the proposal with horror; now it seems to me that it is the very best thing that could be done for all parties, including the wine itself."

There was some further chat as to the course which Jack would follow in the morning, and he decided finally to ride to the borders of Castille in order that he might learn as much as possible as to the feeling of people in that province. Father Ignacio gave him a letter of introduction to the priest in charge of a village a mile or two within the border of Arragon, and the next morning Jack started at daybreak, after a hearty adieu from his host, who insisted on rising to see him off.

CHAPTER XIV

A Prisoner

JACK, with his two troopers, rode away from the hospitable cottage of the priest in high spirits. He determined to avoid Saragossa, as he was not charged with any direct mission from the earl, and wished, therefore, to avoid any official intercourse with the leaders of the province. As soon as the marshal had marched, the people there had risen, had driven out the small French garrison left, and had resumed the management of their own affairs. Jack learned, however, that the city had not formally declared for King Charles. As the priest had told him would be the case, Jack encountered no bodies of armed men during the day; the country had a peaceful aspect, the peasants were working in the fields, and at the villages through which he passed the English uniforms excited a feeling of curiosity rather than of interest. He stopped at several of these and entered into conversation with the inhabitants. He found everywhere an intense hatred of the French prevailing, while but little interest was evinced in the respective claims of Charles and Philip.

After a very long ride he arrived, at nightfall, near the spot to which he was bound. In this

neighbourhood he observed a greater amount of watchfulness and preparation than had prevailed elsewhere. The men, for the most part, remained in their villages, and went about armed. Jack learned that an inroad by the Miquelets of Castille was deemed probable, and that it was thought possible that another French force might follow Tessé from Madrid to Barcelona.

It was late in the evening before Jack reached his destination, where, on his presenting his letter of introduction, he was most heartily received by the priest.

“Father Ignacio tells me,” he said when he had read it, “that you are not only to be welcomed as an officer of the great English general, but that you are in every way deserving of friendship; he adds, too, that you are a first-rate judge of wine, and that you can be trusted as an adviser upon knotty and difficult matters.”

Jack laughed. “I only gave the good father my advice upon two points,” he said; “the first was the admitting to terms of surrender of a body of French troops with whom he was engaged in battle when I arrived; the second was upon the important question of broaching or not broaching a hogshead of particularly good wine.”

“If you advised that the hogshead should be broached,” the priest said smiling, “I can warrant that my good brother Ignacio followed your advice, and can well understand the respect in which he seems to hold your judgment. But do not let us stand talking here.

"Your men will find a stable behind the house where they can stand the horses. Alas! it is uninhabited at present, for my mule, the gentlest and best in the province, was requisitioned—which is another word for stolen—by the French, as they passed through. My faithful beast! I miss her every hour of the day, and I doubt not that she misses me still more sorely. Tell me, señor, my brother Ignacio writes me that he has captured many animals from the French—was Margareta among them? She was a large mule, and in good condition; indeed there was some flesh on her bones. She was a dark chestnut with a white star on the forehead, a little white on her forefeet, and white below the hocks on the hind legs; she had a soft eye, and a peculiar twist in jerking her tail."

The manner of the priest was so earnest that Jack repressed a smile with difficulty.

"I did notice among the mules in one of the wagons one marked somewhat similarly to your description, and, if I mistake not, it, with another, fell to the share of the good priest; but I cannot say that it had much flesh upon its bones, indeed it was in very poor case. Nor did I notice that its eyes were particularly soft, or that there was any peculiarity in the twitching of its tail."

"It may be Margareta," the priest said with some excitement; "the poor beast would naturally lose flesh in the hands of the French, while as to the switch in the tail, it was a sign of welcome which she gave me when I took an apple or a piece

of bread into her stable, and she would not be likely so to greet strangers. I will lose no time in writing to Ignacio to enquire further into the matter. Verily, it seems to me as if the saint had sent you specially here as a bearer of this good news."

Jack spent a pleasant evening with the priest, and learned much as to the state of things upon the frontier. The priest represented the Castillians as bitterly opposed to the claims of Charles; they had no grievances against the French, who had behaved with strict discipline in that province, and had only commenced their excesses upon crossing the frontier into Arragon. This they regarded, though wrongfully, as a hostile country; for, previous to their arrival, the people there had taken no part either way in the struggle, but the overbearing manner of Tessé, and the lax discipline of his troops, had speedily caused an intense feeling of irritation. Resistance had been offered to foraging parties of the French army, and the terrible vengeance which had been taken by Tessé for these acts had roused the whole province in a flame of insurrection.

"There are several bodies of French cavalry across the frontier," the priest said; "occasionally they make flying raids into Arragon, but, as you see, the people are armed, and prepared, and ready to give them a hot reception. The Castillians are like ourselves; if at any time an army should march in this direction against Madrid the Miquelets will oppose them just as we should oppose the French, but they will not leave their homes to interfere with

us, for they know well enough that did they do so we also should cross the line, and fire and destruction would be carried through all the villages on both sides of the border. So at present there is nothing to fear from Castille, but if your English general were to drive the French out of the country, he would have hard work ere he overcame the resistance of that province."

Just as day was breaking the next morning Jack was aroused by shouts in the streets, followed by the heavy trampling of horse. He sprang from the bed and threw on his cloak; as he was buckling on his sword one of the dragoons rushed into his room.

"We are surrounded, sir! I have just looked out, and there are French cavalry all round the house."

As he spoke there was a tremendous knocking at the door. The priest ran into the room. "We are betrayed," he said; "someone must have carried away the news last night of your arrival here, and it has come to the ears of the French cavalry on the other side. I ordered some men out last night to watch the road across the border, but the enemy must have ridden too fast for them to get here first."

"It cannot be helped," Jack said; "you had best open the door, or they will break it in in another minute. Make no resistance, lads," he said to the dragoons, for the second orderly had now joined them; "lay your swords down on the bed; we are caught this time, and must make our escape when

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we can. It is better, anyhow, to have fallen into the hands of the French than of the Spanish."

The sound of the knocking had ceased now, and there was a trampling and clamour of voices as the French soldiers poured into the house. Steps were heard ascending the stairs, the door opened, and the priest, accompanied by a French officer and followed by a number of soldiers, entered the room.

"You are my prisoner, sir," the French officer said.

"I am afraid there is no doubt of that," Jack said, speaking in Spanish; "here is my sword, sir. These two men are my orderlies, and, of course, also surrender. You will observe that we are all in uniform, that we are taken on the soil of Arragon, and that I am here in pursuance of my duty as an officer of the English army."

"You are alone?" the officer asked.

"Yes," Jack said; "there are, so far as I know, no other British but ourselves in Arragon."

"Then we were misinformed," the officer said; "the news was received last night that the Earl of Peterborough was himself here; and although it was but in the afternoon that we had heard that your general was at Valencia, his movements are so swift and erratic that, if we heard of him in Portugal one hour, we should not be surprised to find him here the next." He stopped as shots were heard fired in the streets.

"You must excuse ceremony, sir," he said, "and mount at once with your men and accompany me.

In ten minutes we shall have the whole country buzzing round us like wasps; and now that the object of my ride is accomplished I don't wish to throw away my men's lives."

The horses were saddled without loss of time, and in two or three minutes Jack was trotting down the village in the midst of the French cavalry amid a scathing fire from behind the houses and walls.

The French officer rode at the head of his troop till well beyond the village, then, reining in his horse, joined his prisoner.

"And now," he asked, "whom have I had the honour of capturing?"

"I am Captain Stilwell," Jack replied, "one of the Earl of Peterborough's aides-de-camp."

"I am Captain de Courcy," the French officer said; "happily, although the French and English have taken opposite sides on this question, we can esteem and honour each other as brave and civilized adversaries. As for these Spanish scoundrels, they are no better than banditti; they murder us in our beds, they poison our wine, they as often as not burn us alive if we fall into their hands; they are savages, neither more nor less; and why Philip of Anjou, who could have had all the pleasures of life as a prince of the blood at Versailles should covet the kingship of this country, passes my understanding. And now tell me about that paladin, your general. Peste, what a man! And you are one of his aides-de-camp? Why, if he drags you about everywhere with him, you must lead the life of a dog."

"When I last heard of the general he was at Valencia," Jack said. "But that was ten days since."

"Ten days!" the Frenchman said, "then by now he may be in London, or in Rome, or at Paris."

"With the wind favouring him he might be at Rome, but he could scarcely have arrived at either London or Paris."

"There is no saying," the French officer laughed. "Has he not three-leagued boots, and can he not step from mountain to mountain? Does he not fly through a storm on a broomstick? Can he not put on a cap and make himself invisible? For I can tell you that our soldiers credit him with all these powers. Can he not, by waving his hand, multiply three hundred men into an army, spread them over a wide extent of country, and then cause them to sink into the ground and disappear? Our soldiers are convinced that he is in league with the evil one, even if he be not the gentleman in black himself."

Jack joined in the laugh. "He is a wonderful man," he said, "though he cannot do all you credit him with. But he is absolutely tireless, and can do without sleep for any time; and yet to look at him no one would think that he was in any way a strong man. He is small, thin, and worn-looking—in fact, almost insignificant in appearance, were it not for his keen eye and a certain lofty expression of face. My post is no sinecure, I can assure you, for the general expects all to be able to do as well as himself. But with a chief who never spares

himself all are willing to do their best. Extreme as has been the labour of the troops, severe as have been their hardships, you will never hear a grumble; the men have most implicit confidence in him, and are ready to go anywhere and do anything he orders them."

"He is a marvel," the French officer said. "The way he took Barcelona, and then, with a handful of men, hunted our armies out of Catalonia and Valencia was wonderful; and though it was at our cost, and not a little to our discredit, there is not an officer in the army but admires your general. Fortunately I was not in Barcelona when you laid siege to it, but I was with Las Torres afterwards when you were driving us about like sheep. I shall never forget that time. We never knew when to expect an attack, what force was opposed to us, or from what direction you would come. I laugh now, but it was no joke then."

Three hours' riding took them into the little town from which the French cavalry had started in the middle of the night. On arriving there the French officer at once sent off a trooper to Madrid, reporting the prisoners he had taken, and forty-eight hours later he received orders to himself conduct his prisoners to Madrid.

Upon arriving there Jack was at once taken before the Duke of Berwick, who received him courteously, and asked him many questions concerning the force under the earl, the intentions of the general, and the force which the king had at Barcelona to resist the two French armies now

hurrying before it. To these questions Jack gave cautious answers. As to matters concerning which he was sure that the French must have accurate information, he replied frankly. Fortunately he was, as he truly said, in entire ignorance as to the plans of the earl, and as to Barcelona, he knew nothing whatever of what had taken place there from the day when he suddenly left with Peterborough.

"I would place you on your parole with pleasure," the duke said, "but I tell you frankly that in the present excited state of public feeling I do not think it will be safe for you to move through the streets unprotected. So many of our officers have been murdered in Saragossa and other places, that the lower class of Spaniards would think it a meritorious action to take vengeance on an English officer. Of course I am well aware that the English have nothing to do with these atrocities, but the people in general are not able to draw nice distinctions. I shall send you to France on the first opportunity, to remain there till exchanged."

"Thank you, sir," Jack said; "I should prefer not being put on my parole, for I shall certainly escape if I have the opportunity. I should tell you, sir, that I have ridden through Arragon, and though I do not wish to excuse the murders perpetrated by the Spaniards, I must tell you that I cannot blame them; for, horrible as are their deeds, they are simply acts of retaliation for the abominable atrocities which Marshal Tessé allows and encourages his troops to perpetrate upon the popu-

lation. I have the highest respect, sir, for the French nation, but if I were the Earl of Peterborough, and Marshal Tessé fell into my hands, I would hand him over to the Spaniards to be torn in pieces as he deserves."

"You speak boldly, sir," the duke said sternly.

"I feel what I say, sir," Jack replied. "I think it well that you, a general high in command under the French king, should know the atrocities perpetrated in his name by this man upon defenceless people. I could tell you, sir, a score of stories which I heard in Arragon, although I was but two days there, of massacre and murder which would make your blood run cold. I confess that personally I have no greater interest in King Charles than in King Philip. I have seen so much of the Austrian and his advisers that I believe that if the Earl of Peterborough were to seat him on his throne here to-morrow, he would be driven from the country a fugitive before many weeks were over; but in the same way I am convinced that Philip of Anjou will never be accepted by the Spanish as their king if his cause be stained by such atrocities as those carried out by Marshal Tessé in his name."

The duke then asked Jack if he had any objections to state the particular object for which he was sent into Arragon by his general; and Jack was glad to be able to say truthfully that the earl knew nothing of his being there, he having sent him simply to assist the Count of Cifuentes in barring the advance of the French army into Catalonia,

and that when he had carried out that order he had ridden into Arragon on his own account, in order that he might, on his return to the earl, be able to give him an accurate description of the state of affairs in that province.

"Then so far as you know, Captain Stilwell, the Earl of Peterborough is still at Valencia, and has no intention of leaving that province at present."

"I can say truly, sir, that so far as I know the general had no intention of leaving Valencia; but as his decisions are generally taken instantaneously, and are a surprise to all about him, I should be sorry to assert that the earl remained in Valencia a quarter of an hour after I quitted the city."

"It matters little," the duke said, "the affair is rapidly approaching an end. Barcelona must surrender as soon as Tessé and the Duke de Noailles appear before it; the breaches are open, and there are not a thousand men in garrison. Barcelona once fallen, the cause of the Austrian is lost. Your general is already watched by an army four times as strong as his own, and the 20,000 men under the marshal will compel him to take to his ships, and will stamp out the last embers of the insurrection. You agree with me, do you not?" he asked, as Jack remained silent.

"Well, sir, it seems that it must be as you say, and I have only to reply that you have not reckoned upon the Earl of Peterborough. What he will do I do not pretend to say, but knowing him as I do, I can say that he will give you trouble.

I don't think that anything can be considered as a certainty in which you have the Earl of Peterborough to reckon with."

"He is a great man," the duke said—"a great man, and has performed marvels; but there is a limit to the possibilities which one man can perform, and here that limit is passed. I shall give orders, Captain Stilwell, that your imprisonment is made as little disagreeable as possible, and that you have everything you require."

Jack expressed his thanks and retired. On leaving the room he was again taken charge of by Captain de Courcy and four of his troopers, and was conducted by him to the citadel.

The quarters assigned to Jack were by no means uncomfortable. A good meal was placed before him, and after he had finished it the governor of the citadel called upon him and told him that he was at liberty to go where he would within the walls, and that any wishes he might express he would do his best to comply with. Jack at once availed himself of his liberty by going out into the courtyard, and thence on to the walls of the citadel. It was a strongly fortified and gloomy building, which has now ceased to exist. It covered a considerable portion of ground, and had at one time been a royal residence; the walls were strong and high, and sentries were placed on them at short intervals.

Jack saw at once there was little possibility of escape thence, and decided that he might as well abandon any idea of evasion for the present, and

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would trust to luck in escaping from his escort on the road to the frontier, or, if no opportunity then presented itself, from his prison in France. A week after his arrival he was surprised by being told that an officer wished to see him, and a minute later Major Ferré entered the apartment.

"I only arrived an hour ago," he said, "and learned that you were prisoner here. Who would have thought when we parted last, and you gave me my liberty, that on my arrival here I should find that you had already been a week a prisoner? Horses' legs move faster than men's, you see."

"It is the fortune of war," Jack said smiling. "I am glad to see that you got out of Arragon safely."

"It was thanks to your seeing that we were provided with ammunition," the major said. "The peasants swarmed round us hotly more than once, and it was the fact that we had our arms and were ready to use them, quite as much as my assurances that we were prisoners on parole, and had promised not to serve in Spain until exchanged, that kept them from making an attack upon us; as it was we nearly came to blows several times. I marched that day till the men were ready to drop, and camped at a distance from a road in a lonely place; I dared not scatter my men in a village. The next day we kept steadily on and crossed the frontier into Castille, pretty well worn out, just at night-fall. I had to give my men two days' halt before we could go further, and we have since come by easy stages, which accounts for your being here

so long before us. And now, is there anything that I can do for you? if there is, command my service to the utmost. I shall see the duke this afternoon, and shall tell him that I and my party are indebted to you for our lives. It is well for me that he is in command here instead of the marshal; he is a gentleman, and will respect the parole I gave for myself and my men; if it had been Tessé I might have had trouble, for as likely as not he would have scoffed at my promise, and ordered me and my men back to the front again, and then I should have been placed in a nice fix."

"The best thing you could do for me," Jack said, "would be to suggest to the marshal that he should exchange me against you. If he will let me take my two troopers I would throw in all your men. There will be no occasion to arrange it with our general; you gave your word to me, and I can give it you back again. As I am of no use to him, and you are, I should think he would consent."

"I should think so too," Major Ferré said, "and should be delighted, on both our accounts, if it could be managed."

Three hours later the major returned in high spirits.

"I have arranged the matter," he said, "and we are both free men. You can't stir out of here at present, because it would not be safe for you to go about Madrid; but I have orders to march to-morrow morning, in command of a convoy, to join Las Torres outside Valencia, so you can

ride with me till we get near the town, and then join your people."

Jack was delighted, and the next morning set out with the convoy. His appearance, as he rode by the side of Major Ferré with his two orderlies behind him, excited the greatest surprise and curiosity in the various towns and villages through which they passed. The journey was a pleasant one, Major Ferré exerting himself in every way to make it as pleasant as possible. After four days' journey the convoy arrived within sight of Valencia. When they came to a place where the roads forked the major said:

"That is your way, my dear Stilwell. I hope that some day the fortunes of war will throw us together again, in some pleasant position where we can renew our friendship. Two miles on is a ford across the river, where, as the peasants tell me, two of your vedettes are posted, another hour's ride will take you to Valencia."

With a hearty goodbye on both sides, Jack and his two dragoons rode off, and soon astonished the English vedettes by their appearance on the opposite bank of the river. A few words in English convinced the soldiers that it was no trick that was being played with them, and Jack rode across the ford and then galloped on to Valencia.

"Well, Captain Stilwell," the earl said, as Jack entered his apartment, "what news do you bring me from Barcelona? I hear that Tessé has invested the town."

"My last news is from Madrid, general," Jack

said; "I have had to stay a week in that city." And he then proceeded to relate the series of events which had happened from the time he joined the Count of Cifuentes. "I know I exceeded my duty, general," he said when he finished, "in going up into Arragon without orders; but I felt that I was of little use with the count, who handles the Miquelets well, and I thought that you would be glad of trustworthy information of the state of feeling in Arragon, and perhaps of Castille."

"You were quite right," the earl said, "and have done exceedingly well. Yours has been an adventure after my own heart, and you have just arrived here in time, for I am on the point of starting to do what I can to harass the besiegers of Barcelona."

CHAPTER XV

The Relief of Barcelona

ALTHOUGH for months it was evident that the French were preparing to make a great effort to recapture Barcelona, Charles and his German advisers had done nothing whatever to place the city in the position to resist a siege. The fortifications remained just as they had been when Peterborough had captured the city. The breaches which had been made by the English cannon were still open, and even that in the all-important citadel of Montjuich remained as it had been left by the explosion of the magazine.

Not until Tessé was pressing down from Lerida and De Noailles from Roussillon did the king awake to his danger. Orders were sent out to recall all the troops who were within reach, the country people were set to work collecting provisions, and the king made an urgent appeal to the citizens to aid in repairing the fortifications. The appeal was responded to; the whole male population took up arms, even priests and friars enrolling themselves in the ranks.

The women and children were formed into companies, and all Barcelona laboured in carrying

materials and in repairing the breaches. The king had received a letter from Peterborough proposing the plan of which he had spoken to his aides-de-camp, and which, had it been carried out, would have changed the fate of Spain. His suggestion was, that Charles should at once make his way by sea to Portugal, which, as the blockade had not then commenced, he could have easily done, there to put himself at the head of the allied army, 26,000 strong, and march straight upon Madrid. This could have been done with a certainty of success, for the west of Spain and the capital had been denuded of troops for the invasion of Catalonia and Valencia, and no more than 2000 men could have been collected to oppose the invaders.

“If your majesty will undertake to do this,” wrote the earl, “I will undertake to maintain the province here, and perhaps to open a way to Madrid.”

But now, as before, this bold but really safe counsel was overruled by Charles’s German courtiers, and he resolved to remain in Barcelona and wait a siege.

As soon as Peterborough received the answer, he left a small garrison in Valencia, and marched away with all the force he could collect, which, however, numbered only 2000 foot and 600 horse, while De Noailles had no less than 20,000 gathered round Barcelona. Peterborough moved rapidly across the country, pushing forward at the utmost speed of the troops till he arrived within two leagues of Barcelona, and took up a strong posi-

tion among the mountains, where he was at once joined by the Count of Cifuentes and his peasant army.

"Ah, count," the earl said as he rode into his camp, "I am glad to see you again. You did not succeed in stopping Tessé, but by all accounts you mauled him handsomely. And now, what are our prospects?"

"Indeed, sir, they are not overbright, and I do not see that we can effect much to aid the king. My men will fight well enough, as Captain Stilwell has witnessed, when they choose their position and shoot behind shelter, but they would be of no use whatever in a regular action; and as to advancing into the plain to give battle with you against 20,000 regular troops, they would not attempt it, even if you were to join your orders to mine."

"We will not ask them, count," Peterborough said. "I know the Miquelets by this time. They are admirable for irregular war, but worse than useless for anything else. All we will ask of them, count, is to scatter in strong bodies over the hills, to guard every road, and cut off any parties of the enemy who may venture to go out to gather provisions or forage. If they can manage occasionally to threaten an attack upon the French camp, so much the better."

The next morning a strong body of the French took post round Montjuich, and at nine o'clock a force of infantry, supported by two squadrons of horse, attempted to carry the western outworks by storm. This was the weakest part of the

citadel, and was manned by only a hundred men of Colonel Hamilton's regiment, who had arrived the night before, having in two days ridden seventy miles on mules.

As the French advanced they received them with great determination, and poured in so sharp a fire that the assailants speedily retired with considerable loss. As they fell back the English threw up their caps and raised loud shouts, which so exasperated the enemy that they re-formed and returned several times to the assault, but only to be repulsed as on their first attempt. This was a sharp check to the French, who had expected to find the place guarded only by the usual garrison of forty Spaniards.

When the sound of firing was heard in the town the whole garrison turned out and marched to support Montjuich, only twelve men being left behind for a guard to the king. This repulse of the first attempt of the enemy raised the spirits of the townsmen, and bands of them ventured beyond the walls, and, sheltering in the gardens and groves, maintained a strong fire upon the French.

Finding that Barcelona was not to be taken as easily as they had expected, the French generals extended their camp so as to completely surround the town. On their side the citizens were not inactive, and, sallying out, managed to cut off and drive in a flock of seven hundred of the enemy's sheep and twelve of their mules.

The following night the besieged sustained a severe loss by the treacherous surrender, by its

commander, of Fort Redonda, which stood on the seashore and commanded the landing. The enemy at once profited by this advantage and began landing their provisions, guns, and ammunition. This misfortune was, however, balanced by the enterprise of Brigadiers-general Lord Donegal and Sentiman, with two English and two newly raised Catalan battalions. They received the king's orders to return to Barcelona too late to reach the town before its investment, but now managed, under cover of night, to elude the enemy and enter the city in safety.

When the enemy received news of the success of this attempt they closed in their left wing to the eastward, in hopes of preventing further reinforcements from entering the town. But they had not reckoned upon the Earl of Peterborough, who had received news that the garrison of Gerona, after evacuating that town on the approach of the army of the Duke de Noailles, had embarked in small boats and were about to attempt a landing near Barcelona, on the north side. On receipt of the news he started as night fell with his whole force from his camp in the mountains, and having, after a march of nearly twenty miles, arrived at the spot named for the debarkation just as the boats were nearing the shore, and having escorted the Gerona men past the enemy's outpost and into the town, without the loss of a man, he again retired to the mountains. These accessions of strength raised the force of troops in the besieged town to upwards of 3000.

The next day a case of treason was discovered among the Spaniards in the garrison of Montjuich. A boy confessed that he had been hired by one of these men to put out all the gun matches, and to throw the priming powder out of the matchlocks that night. He was told to do this on the weakest side of the works, where the attack would probably be made.

The discovery of this intended treason, following so closely on that at Fort Redonda, excited suspicions of the loyalty of the Spanish governor of Montjuich, and he was superseded and the Earl of Donegal appointed to the command. For the next six days the French continued to raise battery after battery around Montjuich. Lord Donegal made some gallant sallies and several times drove the besiegers from their works, but in each case they returned in such overwhelming force that he was obliged to abandon the positions he had won and to fall back into the citadel.

The Miquelets, of whom there were many in the town, aided the besieged by harassing the French. Every night they stole into their camp, murdered officers in their tents, carried off horses, slew sentries, and kept the enemy in a perpetual state of watchfulness.

At eight o'clock on the morning of the 15th of April the besiegers made a furious attack on the western outwork of Montjuich, having ascertained that it was defended only by a party of one of the newly raised Spanish regiments. They captured the post without difficulty, the Spaniards flying at

the first assault, but on the inner ramparts they were met by Donegal and his grenadiers, and a desperate struggle took place which lasted for two hours.

The English fought with the greatest obstinacy, and frequently flung back among their assailants the grenades which the latter showered among them, before they had time to explode, Lord Donegal himself setting the men the example. But though able to prevent the French from advancing further, the English could not recover the outpost which the Spaniards had abandoned, and the French formed entrenchments and mounted a battery upon it.

In spite of the continued fire which the besiegers now poured in upon it from all sides, Lord Donegal held out bravely. The little force under his command was much reduced in numbers, and so worn out by constant exertion and loss of sleep that men frequently fell asleep while under arms under the heaviest fire. The besiegers were not idle in other directions. Several mortar vessels moved close inshore and threw shells into the town, while the batteries poured in red-hot shot. This spread great alarm throughout the town. The people could be hardly induced to continue working on the defences, and many took refuge in cellars or in the churches. Ammunition began to fail, and despair was taking possession of the defenders, when, at two o'clock in the morning of the 21st, a galley ran safely into the harbour bearing a supply of powder and encouraging messages from Lord Peterborough.

Three days later he managed to throw a body of Neapolitan troops into the town, embarking them in boats at Matero, a small port a few miles to the north-east of the town. He sent them close along the shore in order to pass the enemy's fleet, if possible, unobserved. They found, however, that a line of boats had been drawn across the harbour to blockade the entrance. They attacked the boats, and after a sharp fight, which lasted over an hour, four hundred men succeeded in forcing their way through, and the rest returned to Matero in safety.

Peterborough now determined to endeavour to relieve the town by the desperate expedient of attacking the enemy's camp with his little force. In order to do this with any prospect of success it was necessary to warn the king of his intentions, so that the garrison of the town could issue out and attack the enemy at the same moment from their side. He committed the despatch to Captain Graham, who succeeded in making his way through the enemy's lines to the city. The king agreed to join in a combined attack, and, having arranged all his plans, gave the despatch to Graham to carry back to the earl.

On the way out he was less successful than he had been in entering. He was seized upon by a body of French before he could destroy the paper. Tessé was accordingly warned of the earl's plans, and at the hour appointed for the attack drew up his army in order of battle. Peterborough was ready to advance, and the besieged were all in arms on the ramparts, but seeing that the enemy

were fully prepared the project was abandoned, and the troops returned to their quarters.

But the fall of Montjuich was at hand. The besiegers secretly massed a large force in the trenches. At midday on the 22nd a salvo of four mortars gave the signal. The French rushed in with loud shouts and effected a complete surprise. Before the troops could get under arms two bastions were captured.

So sudden was the affair that many of the English officers, hearing the firing, ran out from the keep, and seeing some foreign troops drawn up in the works joined them, concluding that they were Dutch, and were only undeceived by finding themselves taken prisoners. The men were so confused by the loss of many of the officers, that, had the French pushed in at once, they would have been able to carry the main body of the works with but little resistance. They halted, however, in the bastions they had won. The next morning the people of Barcelona, headed by their priests, sallied out to effect the relief of Montjuich, but were easily driven back by the besiegers. The little garrison of the castle sallied out to meet their friends, but when these retreated to the town they had to fight their way back to the castle, which they regained with great difficulty, the gallant Earl of Donegal and many of his officers being killed.

Finding that their position was now desperate, the remnant of the British troops abandoned the castle they had so stoutly defended, and succeeded in making their way safely into the city. Tessé now pushed on the siege of the town with vigour,

Batteries of heavy guns were raised opposite the newly-mended breaches, and so close did he plant his guns to the walls that the artillery of the besieged could not be depressed sufficiently to play upon them, while so heavy a fire of infantry was kept up upon the walls, that their defenders were unable to reply effectively with their musketry.

The walls crumbled rapidly, and the defenders busied themselves in raising inner defences behind the breaches. Had the French been commanded by an enterprising general there is little doubt that they could have carried the town by assault, but Tessé, in his overcaution, waited until success was a certainty. The alarm in Barcelona was great, and the king sent messenger after messenger to Peterborough to urge him to come to his relief; but, daring as was the earl when he considered success to be possible, he would not venture his little force upon an enterprise which was, he felt, hopeless, and he knew that the only possible relief for the city was the arrival of the English fleet.

Early in March Admiral Sir John Leake and Baron Wassenaer had sailed from Lisbon with the combined fleet in accordance with Peterborough's orders; but the wind was contrary, and it was fully six weeks after starting that they reached the Straits, where they were joined by Captain Price with a small squadron, on board of which were two English regiments. It was not until the 24th of April that they sailed from Gibraltar.

On reaching Altea they received news that another squadron had sailed from Lisbon to join

them, and, in spite of the warm remonstrances of General Stanhope, who commanded the troops on board, the Dutch and English admirals determined to await the arrival of the reinforcements before sailing to give battle to the fleet of the Count of Toulouse before Barcelona.

On the 3rd of April Sir George Byng arrived at Altea with some ships from Ireland, and the next day Commodore Walker, with the squadron from Lisbon, also arrived; but the wind was now contrary, and although the fleet set sail, for three days they made no progress whatever, and each hour so wasted rendered the position of the besieged at Barcelona more and more desperate. While lying at Altea General Stanhope had sent a message to Lord Peterborough telling him that he would use every means in his power to hasten Sir John Leake's movements, and that he would give him timely notice of the approach of the fleet.

He said that, as it was of the utmost importance that the enemy should remain in ignorance of the approaching succours, his messenger should carry only a half-sheet of blank paper, so that if he were taken by the enemy they would learn nothing from his despatch. When the fleet sailed he sent off a second messenger, who got safely to the earl, and delivered his blank despatch. With the exception of his aide-de-camp, who was always in his confidence, he told no one the meaning of this blank despatch, and his officers were surprised when orders were issued for the little army at once to prepare for a night march. Officers and men had,

however, most implicit confidence in their general, and, doubting not that some daring enterprise was at hand, they started in high spirits.

All through the night they marched in a south-westerly direction over the hills, and at daybreak reached the little seaport of Sitjes, some seven leagues from Barcelona. Ordering the wearied soldiers to encamp behind some low hills, the indefatigable general rode with Jack Stilwell into the little port, and at once, by offering large rewards, set the sailors and fishermen at work to collect the boats, barges, and fishing smacks along the neighbouring coast, and to bring them to Sitjes.

In two days he had succeeded in collecting a sufficient number to carry the whole force. The news of the work upon which the general was engaged soon spread among the force and caused the greatest astonishment. Jack Stilwell was overwhelmed with questions as to the intentions of the general.

“What on earth are we going to do next, Stilwell?” one of the colonels said to him. “We are all ready, you know, to do anything that the chief bids us, but for the life of us no one can make this business out. The only possible thing seems to be that the chief intends to attack the French fleet, and desperate as many of his exploits have been, they would be as nothing to that. Even the earl could surely not expect that fifteen hundred men in fishing boats and barges could attack a fleet of some thirty men-of-war. The idea seems

preposterous, and yet one does not see what else he can have got in his head."

"Of course, colonel," Jack said laughing, "you do not expect me to tell you what are the general's plans. You may be quite sure that, whatever they are, there is nothing absolutely impossible about them, for you know that, although the general may undertake desperate things, he never attempts anything that has not at least a possibility of success; in fact, as you know, he has never yet failed in any enterprise that he has undertaken."

"That is true enough," the colonel said, "and yet for the life of me I cannot make out what else he can be thinking of. Certainly to attack Toulouse would be madness, and yet there is no one else to attack."

"Well, colonel, I can only say that time will show, and I don't think you will have to wait very long before you know as much about it as I do."

Jack was right in this, for on the night of the second day the earl called his officers together, and informed them that he was waiting to join the English fleet, which at any moment might come in sight. As hitherto nothing had been known about the arrival of reinforcements, the news excited the greatest joy. The earl had hoped that at daybreak the fleet would be in sight, and as soon as it was light he mounted a hill which gave him a wide view over the sea, but to his deep disappointment not a sail appeared above the horizon. Knowing the desperate state of the garrison of Barcelona, and that at any hour he might receive

news that an assault had been delivered and the city captured, his disappointment at the delay in the appearance of the fleet was unbounded.

The roar of the distant guns round Barcelona came distinctly to his ears, and he was almost wild with impatience and anxiety. On reaching the shore again he found that a fast-sailing felucca had just come in from Barcelona. She had managed to evade the blockading fleet, and bore an urgent letter from the king, praying Peterborough to come to his assistance. The earl did not hesitate a moment, but determined to set sail at once to find the fleet, and to bring it on to Barcelona with all speed.

The astonishment and dismay of his officers at the news that their general was about to leave them and embark on such an enterprise was very great, but the earl explained to the leaders the reasons for his anxiety to gain the fleet. His commission appointed him to the command at sea as well as on land, and on joining the fleet he would be its admiral-in-chief. He feared that at the sight of so powerful an armament the Count of Toulouse would at once decline battle and make for France. He determined, therefore, to advance only with a force considerably inferior to that of the French, in which case Toulouse, rather than abandon the siege of Barcelona just when success seemed assured, would sail out and give battle.

Should he do so the earl, however inferior his force, had no doubts as to obtaining victory. Accompanied only by Jack Stilwell and by Captain

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Humphrey, who had taken the place of Graham, he embarked on board the little felucca and put to sea. The weather was cold and stormy, and the master of the boat did not like putting out far from shore; but the earl was peremptory, and the felucca stood well out to sea. Night came on without any signs of the fleet being discovered. The hours of darkness passed slowly, for the boat was undecked and afforded no shelter, and the heavy seas which broke over her kept all on board wetted to the skin.

At daybreak, to their great joy, they perceived a British man-of-war approaching. They at once made for her, and found she was the *Leopard*, commanded by Captain Price. The astonishment of that officer, and of all on board, was unbounded at being boarded at break of day almost out of sight of land from an open boat by the admiral of all the fleets. The earl's stay on board was but a short one. As soon as he had learned the whereabouts of the rest of the fleet, and given instructions to Captain Price, he again embarked in the felucca, and sailed for Sitjes.

The joy of the troops was great at the return of their general, for the night had been so stormy that there were great fears for his safety; but he was not to remain with them long, for, having given orders that the whole disposable force, about 1400 men, should embark in the boats before daybreak next morning, and follow the fleet to Barcelona, he again with his aides-de-camp took his place in the felucca and sailed for the fleet.

In the middle of the night he came across them,

and boarding the *Prince George*, hoisted his flag as admiral of the fleet on the maintop, and took the command. He then sent a boat to Sir John Leake to acquaint him with his orders and intentions, and another boat to advise General Stanhope of his arrival; but the darkness delayed the delivery of these messages till nearly morning, and when day appeared the whole fleet was amazed at seeing the flag of the admiral-in-chief flying on the *Prince George*. The wind was strong and favourable, and the fleet crowded on all sail; but when within about eighteen miles of Barcelona one of the French look-out ships sighted them, and made a signal to a consort farther along. She in turn passed on the news until it reached the Count of Toulouse, who, without waiting to ascertain the strength of the approaching squadron, at once signalled to his fleet to weigh anchor, and, putting to sea, sailed for France.

The disappointment of the earl was great, as he had fully calculated upon gaining a great naval battle in sight of the city he had come to relieve. On the afternoon of the 8th of May the leading vessels anchored off Barcelona, and preparations were at once made for the landing of the troops. The first to set foot on shore were the earl's veteran troops, who had according to his orders accompanied the fleet from Sitjes. The succour was welcome, indeed; the breaches were no longer defensible, and an assault was hourly expected. The king himself came down to receive the earl and his army; the city went wild with joy.

For a few days the French made a show of carrying on the siege. They were still enormously superior in force; but the energy and skill of Peterborough counterbalanced the inequality. He worked day and night in superintending the works of defence, and in placing the troops in readiness for the expected assault. Philip and many of his officers were still in favour of an attack upon the city; but Tessé as usual was opposed to anything like vigorous measures, and his views were adopted by a council of war.

At one o'clock, on the morning of the 11th of May, the besiegers broke up their camp, and in great confusion made their way towards the French frontier, for Tessé preferred even the ignominy of falling back into France with his unsuccessful and dispirited army to retracing his steps towards Saragossa, where his devastations and cruelty had caused the whole population to rise in insurrection as soon as his army had passed into Catalonia. Besides which, he had received news that Peterborough had caused every pass and town on his way to the west to be fortified and held by the Miquelets. Philip accompanied the retreating army to Roussillon. The downfall of his hopes had been utter and complete. But a few weeks before it had seemed that Spain was his, and that the forces at his disposal were ample to crush out the insurrection in Barcelona, and to sweep into the sea the handful of the invaders. But all his plans had been baffled, all his hopes brought to nought by the genius and energy of one man, in spite of that

man being thwarted at every turn by the imbecile German coterie who surrounded the king, and by the jealousy and ill will of his fellow generals.

Bad news met the fugitive at Roussillon. There he heard that his countrymen had suffered a disastrous defeat at Ramillies; that nearly all the Netherlands had been wrested from France, that a heavy defeat had been inflicted upon her at Turin, and that Italy was wellnigh lost. It needed, indeed, but the smallest amount of unanimity, enterprise, and confidence on the part of the advisers and generals of King Charles to have placed him securely and permanently upon the throne of Spain.

When the flight of the besieging army was discovered after daybreak by the besieged, they poured out from Barcelona into the deserted camp. All the ordnance and stores of the French had been abandoned. Two hundred heavy brass guns, thirty mortars, and a vast quantity of shot, shells, and entrenching tools, three thousand barrels of powder, ten thousand sacks of corn, and a vast quantity of provisions and stores were found left behind in the camp. Tessé had left, too, all his sick and wounded, with a letter to the Earl of Peterborough begging him to see that they were well cared for.

The news of the hasty retreat of Marshal Tessé from before Barcelona caused a shock of surprise throughout Europe. In France it had never been doubted that Barcelona would fall, and as to the insurrection, it was believed that it could be trampled

out without difficulty by the 25,000 French veterans whom the marshal had at his disposal. As to the handful of British troops whose exploits had occasioned such astonishment, none had supposed for a moment that they would be able to effect anything when opposed to so overwhelming a force of the disciplined troops of France.

Peterborough himself had hardly hoped to save Barcelona, but, unlike his enemies, he had not considered that the fall of that city would necessarily entail the final defeat of the cause for which he fought. While busying himself with the marches and achievements of the troops under his command, he had never ceased to take measures to provide for the future. His marches and countermarches had made him thoroughly acquainted with the country, and he had won the entire confidence of the people.

He had, therefore, taken measures that even if Barcelona fell Philip should not march back again to his capital. From the day Tessé advanced he had had thousands of the country people at work, under the direction of a few of his own officers, rendering each of the three roads by which the French army could march from Barcelona to Madrid impracticable. Gorges were blocked with vast masses of rock rolled down from the mountain-side at spots where the road wound along on the face of precipices; and where it had only been made by blasting, it was by similar means entirely destroyed. Bridges were broken down, every castle and town on the lines of retreat placed in

a state of defence, and the cattle and provisions driven off to places of safety.

Thus while the earl was himself engaged in the most perilous adventures, he neglected nothing that the most prudent and cautious general could have suggested to ensure the success of his plans. Even when affairs looked most unpromising in Barcelona the earl wrote cheerfully to the Duke of Savoy, saying that the circumstances were much better than were generally supposed; and that "the French officers, ignorant of the situation of the country, would be astonished at the difficulties that would be opposed to them on advancing even after success; and that if the siege were raised they would be forced to abandon Spain, while all the western frontier would be clear for the progress of Lord Galway and Das Minas to Madrid".

A few days after the retreat of Marshal Tessé, to Jack's great pleasure Graham came into Barcelona. He had, in the confusion of the retreat, had little difficulty in slipping away from his captors. His only danger had been from the peasantry, at whose hands he had narrowly escaped death, as they took him for a French officer; but, upon being convinced by his assurances that he was an Englishman and an aide-de-camp of the Earl of Peterborough, they had provided him with a horse to make his way back to Barcelona.

CHAPTER XVI

Ingratitude

BARCELONA rescued, Peterborough at once urged the king to march upon Madrid and have himself proclaimed king in his capital. There was no force which could oppose his advance, and Lord Galway and the Portuguese could move unresisted from the west and meet him there. But it was a long time before Charles and his counsellors would listen to his advice; and although at last they agreed to follow it, their resolution was short. In the first place, they determined to leave so large a force to garrison Catalonia that the army available for the advance on Madrid would be very seriously weakened—1500 English and 1100 Spaniards were to be left at Barcelona, 1600 English and Dutch and 1500 Spanish at Gerona, 850 Spanish and Dutch at Lerida, and 500 Spanish at Tortosa.

This left but 6500 men available for service in the field, and even this number was subsequently diminished by the vacillating Charles to 4500. As Peterborough wrote to Lord Halifax: "We have saved kingdoms in spite of the king, who would abandon them, and we have waged more dangerous war with ministers than with enemies. Lord Gal-

way and the Portuguese generals pass all understanding."

No wonder the earl was astounded by the incompetence of Lord Galway and the Portuguese generals. They had 20,000 men, while to oppose them there were but 5000 under the Duke of Berwick; and yet after entering Spain they fell back, without doing anything, into Portugal—their retreat beginning on the 11th of May, the day on which Philip retreated from Barcelona. So that on the opposite side of Spain two large armies simultaneously retired before others vastly weaker than themselves. When the news of Tessé's retreat to France reached Portugal they again advanced. Berwick was too weak to oppose them, and on the 25th of June the advance guard of the allies occupied Madrid, and there proclaimed Charles as king.

Had Galway and his colleagues now shown the slightest energy, and moved against Berwick's little force, with which was Philip himself, they could have driven them across the frontier without striking a blow, and the French cause would have been lost in Spain; but, having reached Madrid, they remained there doing absolutely nothing—leaving ample time to Philip to repair his misfortunes, receive aid from France, and recommence the campaign with vigour. As Peterborough wrote indignantly to General Stanhope: "Their halt is as fatal as was Hannibal's at Capua".

As soon as the movement upon Madrid had been decided upon, Peterborough sailed with the English and Dutch infantry to Valencia, where he was

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received with enthusiasm by the inhabitants. He at once set to work to raise a regiment of dragoons, and organized them in three weeks. The very day they were mounted he marched them upon Castille. During this time not only had Lord Galway made no movement, but he had joined in the German intrigue by which Charles was induced to abandon the plan of marching to his capital under the escort of Peterborough.

The allied generals at Madrid were indeed basely jealous of the brilliant conqueror of Catalonia and Valencia. His deeds had thrown theirs entirely into the shade. With utterly insufficient means he had done everything; with ample means they had effected nothing, and had only been enabled to enter Madrid by the fact that he had drawn off the army which had successfully opposed them.

After incessant labour in organizing his force, the earl sent 2000 men, under the command of Lieutenant-general Wyndham, to besiege the towns of Requena and Cuenca—two places of some strength which blocked the road between Valencia and Madrid.

Wyndham easily accomplished the task; and the road being thus secured, Peterborough wrote to Charles that “nothing remained to hinder him from entering Madrid with even a small escort of horse”. The earl had everything prepared along the road for the passage of the king; but, although he wrote over and over again urging him not to delay, Charles refused to stir, and told General Stanhope (who backed Peterborough’s entreaties)

that he had "no becoming equipment with which to enter his capital".

"Sire," the English general exclaimed in indignant astonishment, "our William the Third entered London in a hackney, with a cloak-bag behind it, and was made king not many weeks after."

A month after the date originally settled Charles set out and proceeded to Tarragona, but then, to the astonishment of the English general and envoy, they learned he had altered his mind and taken the route to Saragossa. When he heard the news, Peterborough sent couriers day after day with urgent letters to the king. He prevailed upon a deputation of the Valencian nobility to follow with the same purpose, and transmitted the opinion of a council of war, which was unanimous in entreating the king to stay his steps. The king again hesitated, and was about to follow Peterborough's advice, when a French officer in the Portuguese service arrived from Galway and Das Minas, again urging him to move by the route which they had suggested.

Charles again hesitated, the Count of Cifuentes (who was with him) gave his advice in favour of the Saragossa route, and the king decided on that line. On the 26th of July the earl summoned a council of war, including the governor of Valencia, two Spanish generals, and his own officers. They agreed unanimously that Peterborough should march his army to Madrid or join the army in Portugal, as circumstances might require. Just before they started letters came in from the king

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desiring that Peterborough should send the forces under his command either to relieve the Duke of Savoy or to capture the Balearic Isles.

The earl declined to follow this ungrateful suggestion, which was manifestly intended by Charles and his advisers, English, Portuguese, and German, to send away from his kingdom the man who had won it for him. Being fortunately independent of orders, Peterborough marched for Castille, as he and the council of war had previously determined.

Charles was not long in regretting that he had not followed Lord Peterborough's advice. Instead of the triumphant procession from Saragossa to Madrid, which he had been promised, he was met with the most determined opposition.

Every town and village in the centre and south of Spain rose against him; Salamanca and Toledo declared for Philip, and Andalusia raised 18,000 men. The troops of Las Torres from Valencia, and those who had retreated under Tessé to Rousillon, had joined Berwick at Xadraque, and Philip had placed himself at the head of this formidable army. Charles was obliged to send in the utmost haste to ask the Earl of Peterborough to extricate him from the position in which he had placed himself by neglecting his advice.

The earl instantly complied with the request, and marching with all speed overtook the king on the 4th of August at Pastrina, and thence on the following day escorted him in safety to the army of Portugal at Guadalaxara.

The total strength of the united allied army was 18,000 men—a force inferior, indeed, to that with which Berwick confronted them; and that portion brought by Lord Galway and the Portuguese general Das Minas was not to be relied upon, having fallen into a state of great indiscipline owing to the tedious delays, the frequent retreats, and the long inactivity to which it had been subjected by the incompetence of its leaders. That this was so was evident by the fact that the day after the king's arrival the French made a partial attack, and many of the allied battalions at once fell into complete confusion. But this was not the greatest drawback to the efficiency of the allied army; they were paralysed by the dissensions of their commanders Galway, Das Minas, and the Dutch Count de Noyelles. Each and all declined to acknowledge Peterborough as commander-in-chief. The earl then offered to waive his own rights entirely and to fight as a simple volunteer, and that Dan Minas, Lord Galway, and the Dutch general should each command their own forces, receiving their orders from the king.

The offer was, however, refused by the three generals. The partisans of the various leaders shared their animosity. The English troops of Peterborough claiming, and justly, that Catalonia and Valencia had been gained and won by him, and that to him alone the king owed his crown, were furious that those who had shown nought but incapacity from the commencement of the campaign should now refuse to recognize his authority.

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While the disputes continued Berwick had nearly succeeded in surprising Galway, and a disastrous defeat had only been prevented by the gallant defence made by Lord Tyrawley of an outpost which he commanded, and which he held for two hours against all the efforts of the French, and so gave time for the army to make a hasty retreat.

The army was moreover straitened by want of provisions; Lord Galway and his colleagues had made no arrangements whatever for its supply. Day and night the German favourites of the king, who had ruined their master's cause by dissuading him from following the advice of Lord Peterborough, now laboured with the king still further to destroy his confidence in Peterborough; and finding himself treated coldly by the ungrateful monarch, who owed everything to him, opposed at every turn by the other generals, and seeing that his presence was worse than useless, Peterborough announced his intention of obeying the orders from Queen Anne, dated the 12th of June, and repeated on the 17th, to proceed to the assistance of the Duke of Savoy.

On the same evening a council of war was held. The king formally laid Peterborough's announcement before the generals, who, delighted to get rid of their rival, unanimously recommended that he should depart.

On the 11th of August, full of mortification and disgust at the treatment that he had experienced and the base ingratitude of the king, Peterborough rode from the camp at Guadalaxara. As if to

humiliate him as far as possible, he was given only an escort of eighty dragoons, although there were serious difficulties to be encountered on the road to Valencia. His two favourite aides-de-camp, Stilwell and Graham, were the only officers who accompanied him. It is satisfactory to know that from the moment of the earl's departure misfortune and disaster fell upon the fortunes of King Charles, and that the crown which he had received from the English earl was wrested from his unworthy grasp.

Peterborough had gone but a short distance when he heard that all his baggage, consisting of eight wagonloads and of the value of £8000, had fallen into the hands of the enemy. When he left Valencia to extricate the king from his difficulties he had ordered it to be sent after him to Guadaluara. When it arrived at Cuenca, General Wyndham, who commanded there, forwarded it with a small escort; but it was attacked while passing through the town of Huete by a party of the Duke of Berwick's troopers.

The earl was furious at the news. Not only were all his personal effects, jewels, and uniforms lost, but his spare horses, carriages, and mules. Upon making enquiry he found that the troopers of Berwick had been aided by the inhabitants of Huete, who had given information to the troopers and shared in the plunder. His first impulse was to burn the town to the ground, and, as when he arrived there he was joined by Wyndham's force, he had ample power to do so.

He immediately summoned the magistrates and

clergy to meet him, and told them in decided terms that they must find his baggage and the rogues that had stolen it. After making a search in the town they were able to find but a small portion of it. They then offered to pay him 10,000 pistoles for his loss, or any other sum which he might choose to name; but the earl, with that singular generosity which formed so marked a part of his character, declined the offer, and said:

“I see you are honest gentlemen; for my part I will sit content with my loss if you will bring all the corn of the district to the army.”

The townspeople were delighted at this clemency, as corn was much more easy to procure than money, and it was accordingly sent to Lord Galway's camp, where it sufficed to supply the whole army for six weeks.

This was an act of almost unparalleled magnanimity and generosity to the generals whose jealousy and machinations had driven him from the army; but the earl was so satisfied at thus heaping coals of fire upon the heads of his rivals, that he continued his journey in the highest state of good humour in spite of the loss which he had suffered, and which, as he was by no means rich, was a very considerable one. He took with him Killigrew's dragoons and sent on Wyndham's brigade to join Lord Galway. On the way he encountered several adventures.

One night when he arrived at the little town of Campillo, he heard of a barbarous massacre that had that day been perpetrated in a neighbouring



village upon a small detachment of English soldiers, who had just been discharged from the hospital at Cuenca, and were proceeding under the command of an officer to join Wyndham's battalion of the guards, to which they belonged. They had slept at the village, and were marching out unconscious of danger when a shot in the back killed their officer, and the peasants at once rushed in upon the men and killed several of them, together with their wives who had accompanied them. The rest were dragged up a hill near the village, and then one by one thrown down a deep pit.

No sooner did the earl hear of the outrage than he ordered the trumpets to sound to horse. The dragoons, who, weary with their long march, had just unsaddled, turned out wondering at the order; but when they heard what had happened, they mounted with an impatience for vengeance equal to that of their general. Arriving at the village they found, to their great disappointment, that the murderers had fled, and that hardly any of the inhabitants remained. They found, however, hidden in the church, the clothes of some of the murdered guardsmen. The sacristan of the church was alleged by the inhabitants, who were narrowly examined, to have taken an active part in the slaughter, and the earl ordered him to be hung up at once to the knocker of his own door. The troops then rode up to the top of the hill, and the earl and his aides-de-camp dismounted at the edge of the pit. They had procured a rope at the village, although the inhabitants insisted that no one could

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be found alive, as the pit, which was a disused one, was of vast depth.

“Is anyone alive down there?” the earl shouted.

“Yes, yes,” a voice cried a short distance below them. “Thank God friends have come; but help me quickly, for I cannot hold on much longer.”

Jack seized the rope and twisted one end round his body. Several of the soldiers lowered him down, and some twenty feet below the edge he came upon the man who had spoken. As he fell he had caught some bushes which grew in the side of the old pit, and having managed to find a ledge on which to place his feet, had maintained his grasp in this perilous position the whole day. As the rope was amply strong enough to hold two, Jack clasped his arms around the man's body and called to those above to haul up. They were soon at the surface.

The soldier, who had fainted when he found himself in safety, was laid down and brandy poured down his throat, and Jack, to his astonishment and satisfaction, recognized in him his old friend Sergeant Edwards. He did not wait, however, for him to recover sensibility, but at once told the troopers to lower him again to the end of the rope. This they did, and Jack then shouted several times, but received no answer. He then dropped a small stone he had brought down with him, but no sound came back in return, and, satisfied that none of the soldiers could have survived the fall, for he was already more than sixty feet below the surface, he shouted to those above to draw him up. He found

that Edwards had now recovered his senses, and was giving to the earl a detailed account of the massacre, which so exasperated him that he gave orders that the village should be burnt to the ground, a command which was willingly carried out by the troopers. Edwards was delighted at recognizing Jack, and when, after the destruction of the village, the party rode back to Campillo for the night, the two old friends had a long chat as to the events which had happened since they last parted at Barcelona.

“Is it true, sir, that the general has resigned his command?”

“Quite true, Edwards.”

“And is he going home, sir?”

“No; he will sail to aid the Duke of Savoy; at least that is the present intention; but I should not be surprised if he is in England ere many months are over.”

“Well, sir, I should like to get my discharge and go home too; being chucked down that pit has given me a regular sickness of campaigning among these savages. Talk about pirates, Captain Stilwell, why, I had rather fall among pirates any day than among these bloodthirsty wretches. Calls themselves Christians too! The pirates wasn't hypocrites, in that way anyhow; they didn't bob down on their knees before every little trumpery doll stuck up by the wayside, and then go and cut a man's throat afterwards—it was all fair and square with them. Anyways, it don't matter to me, as I see, whether they has King Charles or King Philip

to rule over them, I wishes him joy of the job whichever it may be; but I don't see no call to be risking my life in being shot, or chucked down pits, or stabbed in my bed, for such a lot of varmint any longer. I have served my full time, and can take my pension; besides, I have got something like a thousand pounds stowed away in a snug hiding place near Barcelona."

"You have, Edwards? I am glad to hear it; I had no idea you were such a rich man."

"It's prize money, sir, lawful earned prize money, though I don't know between ourselves as the colonel would have approved of it; so I stowed it away and says nothing till I gets a chance to lift it before I set sail. It's been rather worrying me in case we should be ordered to take ship at some other port."

"Well, but how did you get it, Edwards?"

"Well, sir, I know that I can tell you, 'cause I am sure it won't go no further. Just afore the French came down to besiege Barcelona I was up with the brigade at Lerida. The people were pretty much divided up there, but the news as the French was coming to drive us into the sea made the folks as was against us very bold. The sentries had to be doubled at night, for lots of our men were found stabbed, and it was dangerous to go about outside the town except in parties. Well, sir, Sergeant Adams of ours, as smart a soldier as ever wore pig-tail, had fallen in love with the daughter of an inn-keeper at a place four miles from Lerida.

"It wasn't much of a village, but there was a big

convent close by, one of the richest in Spain, they said. The girl was fond of Adams, and had agreed, so he told me, to cut and run when the regiment marched away, and to be spliced to him. I rather tried to dissuade him from the affair, for, as I pointed out, how would a Spanish woman get on in barracks with the other sergeant's wives, specially if she was as pretty as the whole lot put together. However, of course, he wouldn't listen to that—no chap ever does when he's downright in love; so he asked me one afternoon if I would go out with him and Sergeant Saunders to the village, so that while we were having our glass he could manage to get a few words with the girl to arrange about her joining him, for the French were only two or three marches away, and we might have to fall back any day.

"I didn't much like the job, for it was a risky business three of us going so far; but he pointed out that we needn't start till it got dark, so nobody would see us till we got to the village, and we needn't stay there above a quarter of an hour, and could be off before anyone who meant mischief could find out that we were alone; besides, hitherto the people there had always been friendly, for, being just the right distance for a walk, and the wine there being good, our fellows went over there a good deal: so the long and short of it was we went.

"We got there all right, and walked into the wine shop as usual and sat down and called for wine. There were half a dozen fellows sitting there drinking. They were talking aloud when

we entered, but stopped at once as we came in, and looked as men do when you come across them just as they are saying something as is no good about you. We passed the word as usual, and were soon chatting with them. They didn't seem very free and friendly, and asked several questions about the French army, and whether we had any troops coming up to help us hold Lerida. I said we expected five or six thousand in a day or two, which seemed rather to take them by surprise.

“Well, presently Adams got up quietly and went out of the door, and I knew he was going round to the back to meet his girl. I had seen a look pass atween them when she brought in our wine. We went on talking quiet for some time; four or five other men dropped in, and some of them got talking together in low tones, and I began to wish we were well out of it, and to wonder how much longer Adams was going to be before he came back. Suddenly we heard a loud scream, and Manola—that was the girl's name—came rushing in from behind. ‘He's killed him,’ she screamed, and she fell down as if she had been killed too. As I heard afterwards, her old rascal of a father had for some time suspected something was up between her and Adams, and when he missed him had stolen out behind and came upon them just as he was kissing her and saying goodbye. Then he whipped his knife out, and before Adams had time to turn round, stabbed him in the back, and the sergeant fell dead without a word.

“Close behind the girl rushed in the innkeeper, swearing and cursing and calling us heretics, and dogs, and robbers, and every other bad kind of name. The men got up and began to stamp and shout, and seeing that it was no time for argument I said to Saunders, ‘We had best make a bolt of it, Bill.’ So we out swords and made a dash for the inner door, for they had closed in at the other with their knives out. We got safely through the house. Just outside the back door we came upon the body of Adams. We stopped a moment and turned him over to see if he was dead, but it was all up with him.

“It didn’t take a moment to look; but, before it was done, they were upon us, both from behind and running round from the front of the house. We cut and slashed for a moment and then bolted with them at our heels. We got separated in a minute. I turned in amongst some bushes and lost Saunders. I heard afterwards he was killed before he had run fifty yards. Luckily they had missed me for the moment, and I lay down among the bushes and thought it over. The whole village was up by this time, as I could hear by the shouts; and after thinking it over I concluded that there was no chance of my making my way back to Lerida, and that my best plan would be to go up to the convent and ask for shelter there. I knew well enough that once inside I should be safe from the peasants.

“Well, I crawled along for some distance. Half a dozen times they was nigh stumbling over me as they searched about in the gardens and vineyards;

but at last I made my way safe up to the convent and rang at the bell. Presently the little window in the door opened, and a monk said, 'Who is there?' I kept out of his sight and said in Spanish:

" 'A fugitive who seeks for sanctuary.' Thinking I was only somebody who had stabbed three or four men in a row, the monk opened the door. He gave an exclamation when he saw my uniform when I entered, and would have slammed the door in my face; but I pushed in. Then he gave a shout, and five or six other monks came running up and set up a jabbering, and stood staring at me as if I had been a wild beast. Then they wanted to turn me out; but I wouldn't budge, and as I had my sword still in my hand they didn't know what to do.

" At last some chap in authority came down. He talked to me and tried to persuade me to leave; but I said, 'No, I claim sanctuary;' and as they were ready to give sanctuary to the worst of murderers, I didn't see as they could deny it to me who had committed no crime whatever. He went away and came back again after some time, and then told me to sheath my sword and follow him. This I did, and he led the way to a sort of cell where there were some rushes laid on a stone bed, and told me that I could remain there.

" Thinking it was all right I lay down and went to sleep, but was presently woke by half a dozen monks, who were tying my hands and feet with cords. It was no use struggling, so I lay quiet; and when they had done, they carried me away, took me some distance, and went down a flight of

stairs; a door was unlocked, and then I was pitched down on the ground as if I had been a log of wood. I didn't move much that night.

"In the morning there was just enough light came through a little slit high up in the wall to show me that I was in a place about six feet square. It was perfectly bare, without as much as a bit of straw to lie on. Presently two monks came in. One of them untied the cords which fastened my hands. They placed some black bread and a jug of water by me, and then went out again. There they kept me for six days. At the end of that time they told me to come along with them. I had, of course, taken the cords off my legs when I had got my hands free, and I followed them, wondering what was to come next. I was taken to the door of the convent, and there I saw a party of French troopers, to whom the monks handed me over. I mounted behind one of them, and was taken to Marshal Tessé's camp near Lerida, and a couple of days afterwards sent back to Saragossa.

"I didn't stop long in the prison there, for the next day the people rose, turned the French from the citadel, and opened the prison doors and let out all the prisoners. They made a good deal of me, as I was the only Englishman there, supplied me with money and clean clothes, and provided me with a guide and a mule to take me by roundabout byroads so that I should avoid the French army. I put my regimentals in a bag, which I carried behind me, and at last got down to Barcelona the very day before the French arrived there.

"I found my regiment already there. I got a rare blowing up from the colonel for having gone out from Lerida without leave; but, as he said he thought I had been punished enough already, and bore a good character, he overlooked it, of which I was glad enough, I can tell you, for I expected nothing less than reduction to the ranks.

"Well, after Lord Peterborough arrived with the fleet, and the French bolted as hard as they could to France, Wyndham's brigade went up again to Lerida. I got chatting the affair over with Jack Thompson, who was General Wyndham's servant, and we agreed between us that we would give those monks a fright, and perhaps get some compensation out of them. So we got hold of four of Killigrew's dragoons, who, when they heard what was wanted, was ready enough for the spree. So one day when General Wyndham had gone off with a party for the day, Thompson borrowed his hat and plumes and his cloak, and hiding them up, went out of camp with me to a place a quarter of a mile away, where the four troopers with two spare horses were waiting for us. Thompson put on the general's hat and cloak, and mounted one horse, while I got on the other, and away we rode out to the village.

"First of all we went to the inn and seized the innkeeper. Manola wasn't there, and I never heard what became of her—whether her father had sent her to a convent or killed her, I don't know. However, we held a court regular. Thompson he was the judge, and I gave evidence as to the innkeeper having murdered poor Adams, and Thompson sen-

tenced him to death, and we hung him up over his door. When we had set that job right we went to the convent and rang the bell. They opened quick enough this time.

“‘Tell the prior,’ Thompson said, ‘that the Earl of Peterborough is here, and desires to see him instantly.’

“Mighty frightened the monk looked, I can tell you, as he went off to give the message, and came back in a minute, asking Thompson to follow him. We all dismounted. Two of the troopers stopped to look after the horses, and the others with drawn swords followed Thompson and me. We were shown into the prior’s room, which was fit for a prince. The prior looked mighty pale, and so did two or three other chaps who were with him.

“‘Look here,’ Thompson said in an angry tone of voice, ‘I am the Earl of Peterborough, and I hear from this man, Sergeant Edwards, of the king’s regiment of grenadiers, that he was basely and treacherously made a prisoner by you; that he was confined in an underground cell and fed with bread and water for a week, and then handed over to the French. Now, sir, I give you an hour to clear out with all your gang from this convent, which I intend to destroy. You will remain in the courtyard as prisoners. You will then be tried for this treacherous act against one of the King of England’s guards, and all found to have had a hand in the proceeding will be hung.’

“Well, sir, you may just guess the fright they were in. They knew that the earl was just the sort

of man to carry his threat into execution, and they thought their last day was come. You never saw such a set of cowardly wretches in your life. I am blest if they didn't go down on their knees and howl. At last Thompson began to think he had worked them up enough, and he said stern:

“ ‘Well, I am disposed to have mercy, and if in half an hour you pay down the sum of five thousand pounds as a ransom for the convent and your wretched lives I will be merciful.’

“ ‘Then there was a fresh howling. They swore by all the saints that such a sum as five thousand pounds was never heard of. Thompson gradually dropped his demands to three thousand; still they swore they hadn't got it, and he said sternly to one of the troopers:

“ ‘Ride back and fetch up the regiment which is a mile outside the village.’

“ ‘Then there was more howling, and at last they offered to give seven hundred pounds, which was all the money which they had in the treasury, and to make it up in precious stones. After a deal of haggling Thompson consented, and I believe if he had stood out for three times as much he would have got it, for the convent was rich in relics, and no end of precious offerings were stored away in their chests. However, he didn't wish to push matters too far, and in half an hour they brought the money, and a handful of diamonds and rubies, and things they had picked out of their settings in the vases and crucifixes and vestments, and what not.

“We didn’t know if they were real or not; but Thompson told them he should give them to a jeweller to value, and if he found they had cheated him by giving him false stones he would come back and hang the lot of them. So oft we rode again.

“When we got back to Lerida we took two or three of the stones to a jeweller and found that they were all right. Then we divided the swag into three parts as we had agreed. Thompson took one, I took another, and the other was divided among the four troopers, who were not running such a risk as we were. I never heard anything more about the matter, as far as I was concerned, though there was a row. The prior heard that Peterborough had never been near Lerida, and came over and saw General Wyndham.

“Killigrew’s dragoons were paraded, but the prior couldn’t spot any of them. We had chosen four fair fellows, and they had all darkened themselves a bit before they went. Luckily the prior did not say anything about me. I expect he was afraid that when Wyndham heard how I had been treated there he might have inflicted a fresh fine on the convent; however, I was not there at the time, for I had a touch of fever the day after the affair, and made myself out a bit worse than I was, and so got sent down to Barcelona, where I buried my share of the plunder four or five inches deep in a corner of the hospital yard. As to Thompson, there wasn’t any reason why suspicion should fall upon him. Soon after I got back to my regiment

I got ill again and was left in a hospital at Cuenca, and had a narrow escape of it this morning."

"It was a risky business," Jack said, "and it would have gone very hard with you and Thompson if you had been found out."

"So it would, sir. I knew that; but you see it was only right and just those fellows should pay for their treatment of me. If I had laid the case before General Wyndham, no doubt he would have punished them just as severe as I did, only the fine would have gone into the army treasury, instead of going to the right person."

"I am afraid, Edwards, that you have not got rid of those loose notions of morality you picked up among the pirates," Jack said smiling.

"Perhaps not, Captain Stilwell. You see bad habits stick to a man; but I have done with them now. When I get back to England I shall buy a snug public-house at Dover, and with that and my pension I shall be in clover for the rest of my life."

It was not until the voyage home that Jack, after obtaining a promise of secrecy, related to the earl the liberty which had been taken with his name. It was just a freak after Peterborough's heart, and he was immensely amused.

"The rascals!" he said, "they deserved hanging every one of them; but the story is a capital one, and I should like to have been there myself to have seen the fright of the prior and his assistants. They richly deserved what befell them and more for betraying sanctuary. If it had been a scoundrel

who had cut his wife's throat, and stabbed half a dozen men, they would have refused to give him up to the civil power, and would have stood on the rights of sanctuary of the church. I think they were let off very easily. Let me see, is not that the same fellow that I exchanged into the grenadiers at Gibraltar at your request, for his conduct in that business of the mutiny on board your ship?"

"The same man, sir. He has led a queer life. He was a sailor originally, and was taken by pirates and forced to join them, and had a narrow escape of being hung when the vessel he sailed in was captured by an English cruiser; but his life was spared, and he was drafted into the army; and he is a willing and faithful soldier of the queen, and really a worthy fellow."

"He is evidently an arrant old scamp, Stilwell. Still, as long as we recruit our army as we do, we cannot look for morality as well as bravery, and I dare say your fellow is no worse than the rest. If you ever run against him in London, you must bring him to me, and I will hear his story from his own lips."

CHAPTER XVII

Home

UPON the arrival of the Earl of Peterborough at Valencia he was received with the profoundest sympathy and respect by the people, who were filled with indignation at the treatment which the man whose daring and genius had freed Catalonia and Valencia of the French had received at the hands of their ungrateful monarch. Finding that a portion of the fleet had been ordered to the West Indies, the earl was obliged to abandon his project of capturing Minorca and then carrying substantial aid to the Duke of Savoy. He, however, went to Genoa, and there borrowed a hundred thousand pounds, which he brought back to Valencia and sent to the king for the use of the army.

The cause of Charles was already wellnigh desperate. Castille was lost, and the enemy were pressing forward to recover Catalonia and Valencia. Affairs were in the utmost state of confusion. Peterborough's rivals having got rid of him now, quarrelled among themselves, for their only bond of union was their mutual hatred of the earl.

The king himself, while he pretended to flatter him, wrote letters behind his back to England

bringing all sorts of accusations against him, and succeeded in obtaining an order for his return. Before leaving he implored the king and his generals to avoid a battle, which would probably be disastrous, and to content themselves with a defensive war until Eugene of Savoy and the Duke of Marlborough broke the power of France elsewhere. His opinion was overruled, and the result was the disastrous battle of Almanza, in which the hopes of Charles of Austria of obtaining the crown of Spain were finally crushed. Peterborough embarked on the 14th of May on board the *Resolution* man-of-war, commanded by his second son Henry.

The *Resolution* was accompanied by two frigates, the *Enterprise* and the *Milford Haven*. The King of Spain's envoy to the court of Savoy also sailed in the *Resolution*. The earl took with him his two aides-de-camp, who were both too indignant at the treatment which their chief had received to desire to remain with the army in Spain. The little squadron sailed first for Barcelona, where it only remained a few hours, and then set sail for Italy.

On the fifth day at sea they fell in with a French fleet of six men-of-war. Two carried eighty guns, two seventy, one sixty-eight, and the other fifty-eight. The *Resolution* was a slow sailer, and the French, who at once gave chase, gained rapidly upon her. As resistance against such overwhelming odds seemed hopeless, Peterborough determined to go with the Spanish envoy and the state papers on board the *Enterprise*. There was little

time for reflection. A small boat was lowered, and the earl, with a hasty adieu to his son, Jack, and Graham, descended the ship's side with the Spanish envoy and rowed away to the *Enterprise*.

"We are fated to see the inside of a French prison after all," Jack said to Graham.

"I don't know, Stilwell. We have both been in their hands once, and did not stay there long. I can hardly believe that our luck's going to desert us at last."

"I don't see much chance of our escape this time, Graham. Six ships against one are too great odds even for English sailors. The smallest of them carries as many guns as we do, and once a prisoner on board a ship there is no slipping away."

"We are not prisoners yet, Jack, and I don't think that Mordaunt will strike his flag without a struggle, though they are six to one. He is just his father over again as far as courage goes."

"Well, I hope, anyhow, the earl will get away," Jack said. "If it hadn't been for all those state papers he is burdened with I am sure he would have stuck to the *Resolution* and fought it out. It would be just the kind of desperate adventure to suit him. See, he has reached the *Enterprise*, and she and the *Milford Haven* are spreading every sail; but although they will leave us behind I question whether they will outsail the French. They are coming up fast."

"It will soon be dark," Graham said, "and they may be able to slip away. You may be sure

the French will attend to us first, as being the most valuable prize."

"Well, gentlemen," Captain Mordaunt said, coming up to them, "you are going to have a piece of new experience. I know you have been through some apparently hopeless conflicts on land with my father, but I don't think you have ever seen a sea fight."

"Are you going to fight them all, sir?" Jack asked.

"I am going to try," the captain said. "My orders were to go to Leghorn, and to Leghorn I mean to go if the ship floats; but I tell you honestly I do not think there is much chance of our getting there. Still, as long as the ship floats, the British flag will float over her."

"Is there anything we can do, sir?" Jack asked. "We shall be happy to serve as volunteers in any capacity in which you think we may be useful."

"Until it comes to boarding I fear that you cannot help," the captain said, "except by walking about between decks and cheering and inspiring the men. The presence of officers looking cool and confident among them always does good. If the enemy try to board us you shall fight by my side."

The two fastest-sailing French vessels were so close when night fell that it was hopeless to try to evade them either by changing the ship's course or by lowering the sails. At ten o'clock they were less than a mile astern, one on either quarter. The ship had long since been ready for action, and the

men were now called to the guns; but the enemy did not open fire, but could, by the nightglasses, be seen somewhat to shorten sail so as to keep about the same distance behind the *Resolution*.

“Cowardly dogs,” the young captain said, “they do not mean to fight until the whole of their consorts come up. However, we ought not to grumble, as every hour takes us so much nearer port.”

He then ordered the men to lie down by the guns and get what sleep they could until the enemy opened fire. Jack and Graham, finding that there was nothing to be done, threw themselves into their hammocks, and slept till five o'clock in the morning. They were then aroused, and went on deck. The six French ships had now all come up, and were coming on in a body.

“Good morning, gentlemen,” the young captain said gaily. “We have a fine morning for our amusement. I wish the wind would freshen a little more so as to take this lubberly old ship faster through the water.”

At six o'clock the leading vessel of the French squadron opened fire, and at the signal her consorts all followed her example. Some of them were now almost abreast of the *Resolution*, and the iron shower tore through her sails and cut her rigging. She answered with a broadside from both sides, and the battle commenced in earnest.

In all the annals of British seamanship there is no more heroic story than that of the fight between the *Resolution* and the six French men-of-war. From six in the morning until half-past three in

the afternoon she maintained the unequal contest, still keeping on under full sail towards her port, only yawing occasionally to pour a broadside into one or other of her foes. They were now running along the coast, and the peasants on the distant hills must have watched with astonishment the unequal fight as the vessels pressed on past them. By half-past three the *Resolution* was little more than a wreck. Her sails were riddled with holes, many of her spars shot away, her sides ragged and torn, and many of her crew killed, but the remainder of the crew still fought their guns unflinchingly.

“We can do no more,” Captain Mordaunt said to Jack. “The carpenter has just reported that the mainmast is so seriously injured that at any moment it may go over the side. It is impossible to hope any longer to reach Leghorn, but my ship I am determined they shall not have.”

So saying, he gave orders to the first lieutenant, and the vessel's head was suddenly turned straight towards the shore. The French, astonished at so desperate a course, did not venture to follow her, and the *Resolution* threaded her way through the dangerous reefs till at last she brought up with a sudden crash which sent her tottering mainmast over the side.

The French advanced cautiously until nearing the reefs, and then opened a distant fire, which the *Resolution* did not return. The captain ordered the exhausted crew from their guns, a strong allowance of grog was served out, and after a meal the men

felt again ready for work. Jack and his companion were at dinner with the captain, when the officer in charge of the deck reported that the French ships were lowering their boats.

“Let the men rest as long as possible, Mr. Darwin, but when you see the boats fairly on their way towards us beat to quarters.” A few minutes later the roll of the drums was heard. “Now, gentlemen, we will go on deck,” the captain said, “since they will not let us alone. But if their ships could not take us I do not think that their boats will have much chance.”

Dusk was closing in when they went on deck and saw all the boats of the six French men-of-war, crowded with men, rowing in a line towards them. The captain gave the order for the men to load with grape. As soon as the French flotilla came well within range the word was given, and a storm of balls swept their line.

Several of the boats were sunk at once, the others paused to pick up their comrades from the water, and then again dashed forward; but by this time the guns were again loaded, and the hail of iron again crashed into them. With splendid bravery the French still advanced until close to the ship. Then Captain Mordaunt ordered all the lower-deck guns to be run in and the ports closed, and the crew to come on deck. While some worked the upper guns, others kept up a heavy fire of musketry upon the boats, which swarmed round the ship.

Again and again the French made determined

efforts to board, but they were unable to climb the lofty sides of the ship. At length, after suffering terrible loss, the French sailors gave up the attempt and rowed sullenly off to their ships, covered by the darkness from the English fire. Captain Mordaunt took off his cap and gave the signal, and a hearty cheer arose from the crew. The night passed quietly, the terribly diminished crew lay down as they stood by the guns, in readiness to repel another attack, should it be attempted. The next morning one of the French 80-gun ships got under way, and, with merely a rag of canvas shown, and her boats rowing ahead and sounding to find a channel through the reefs, gradually made her way towards the *Resolution*.

“Well, gentlemen,” the captain said, “I think you will agree with me that nothing further can be done. The ship is already half full of water, the magazine is flooded, and the whole of the powder wetted. The ship is a wreck, and I should be only throwing away the men’s lives uselessly by attempting further resistance.”

The officers thoroughly agreed, and with the greatest coolness the captain gave his orders for the abandonment of the vessel. Although the French man-of-war had now opened fire, all the wounded, the whole of the crew, the flags, papers, and everything of value were placed in the boats, and the vessel was then set on fire in a dozen places.

After superintending everything personally, and making sure that the fire had obtained such a hold

that it could not be extinguished, Captain Mordaunt ordered the officers to descend into the boats. Just as he was about to leave the deck himself, the last man on board the ship, a cannon shot from the French man-of-war struck him in the leg. The officers ran back and raised him from the deck.

"It might have been worse," he said cheerfully. "Now, gentlemen, will you carry me down and place me in my gig, and then take your boats as arranged. Be careful, as you row towards shore, to keep the *Resolution* between you and the Frenchman's guns."

Everything was done steadily and in order, and the survivors of the crew of the *Resolution* reached the shore without further loss. The *Resolution* was now in a blaze from end to end, and by eleven o'clock she was burnt to the water's edge. Mordaunt and his crew were kindly received by the people of the country. As the captain himself would not be able to move for some time, Jack and Graham said adieu to him and posted to Turin, where the earl had told them that he should go direct from Leghorn.

They arrived before him, but twenty-four hours after they had reached the capital of Savoy the earl arrived. He had already heard rumours of the desperate fight between the *Resolution* and the enemy, and that his son had been wounded. His aides-de-camp were now able to assure him that, although serious, Captain Mordaunt's wounds were not likely to be fatal, and Peterborough was delighted with the narrative of the gallant achieve-

ment of his son. Shortly afterwards an imperative order for his return reaching the earl, he set out for England through Germany with his two aides-de-camp. Peterborough was suffering from illness caused by the immense exertions he had made through the campaign, and travelled but slowly. He visited many of the German courts, and went for a few days to the camp of Charles of Sweden in Saxony.

After this, by special invitation, he journeyed to the camp of the Duke of Marlborough at Genappes, where he was received with much honour by the great commander. He presented to him his two aides-de-camp.

“They have, my lord duke,” he said, “been my faithful friends throughout the whole campaign in Spain, they have shared all my dangers, and any credit I may have gained is due in no small degree to their zeal and activity. It is unlikely that I shall again command an army in the field, and, therefore, I would recommend them to you. They will accompany me to England, for they, too, need a rest, after their exertions; after that I trust that they may be sent out to fight under your orders, and I trust that you will keep them in your eye, and will give them the advantage of your protection and favour.”

The duke promised to do so, and, after a few days' stay in the camp, the earl with his two followers started for England, where he arrived on the 20th of August, 1707, nearly two years to a day from the date when he had appeared, with a

force under his command, before Barcelona. But the campaign itself, so far as he was concerned, had lasted less than a year, as it was in August, 1706, that he rode into Valencia, after having been deprived of his command.

In that year he exhibited military qualities which have never been surpassed. Daring to the point of extreme rashness, where there was a possibility of success, he was prudent and cautious in the extreme when prudence was more necessary than daring. With absurdly insufficient means he all but conquered Spain for Charles of Austria, and would have succeeded in doing so altogether had he not, from first to last, been thwarted and hampered by jealousy, malignity, stupidity, and irresolution on the part of the king, his courtiers, and the generals who should have been the earl's assistants, but who were his rivals, detractors, and enemies.

It must be owned that Peterborough owed this opposition in some degree to himself. He was impatient of fools, and took no pains to conceal his contempt and dislike for those whose intellects were inferior to his own. His independence of spirit and eccentricity of manner set the formal German and Spanish advisers of the king against him, and, although adored by the officers and men who served under him, he made almost every man of rank approaching his own who came in contact with him his personal enemy. Among the bulk of the Spanish people of the provinces in which he warred he was beloved as well as admired, and

even to this day legends of the brilliant and indefatigable English general are still current among the people of Catalonia and Valencia. No man ever served the cause to which he devoted himself with greater zeal and sincerity. He was lavish of his own private means in its interest, and, even when his advice and opinion were most slighted, he was ready to sacrifice himself, his rank, and dignity, to the good of the cause. Had he had the good fortune to command an army of his own countrymen, unfettered by others, it is probable that he would have gained a renown equal to that of the greatest commanders the world has known.

The great services which he had rendered were warmly felt and acknowledged by the people of England on his return, and the attempts of his enemies to undermine his reputation were confuted by the papers which he brought back with him. For a time Peterborough took a considerable part in politics, and his acrimony in debate so enraged his enemies that his conduct during the war in Spain was called into question. A debate on the subject took place. In this he successfully defended himself from the attacks made against him, and a formal vote of thanks to him was passed.

Some years afterwards he retired altogether from public life, and privately married Miss Anastasia Robinson, his first wife having died many years before. Miss Robinson was a singer of the highest repute, of the most amiable character, and kindest disposition. There was no reason why the match should not have been publicly acknowledged, as

the lady was held in universal esteem; but, with his usual eccentricity, the earl insisted on the marriage being kept a secret, and did not announce it until on his deathbed in the year 1735. Lady Peterborough lived in profound retirement, universally beloved and honoured, to the age of eighty-eight.

Upon arriving in London Jack stayed for a few days with his friend Graham, whose family lived there. The earl had told the young officers that he would introduce them to the queen, but, on their calling by appointment on him at his hotel on the third day after their arrival in town, Peterborough said:

“You had best go about your own business for a time; the queen is out of temper. The ears of ministers have been poisoned by lying letters from my enemies in Spain, but it will all come right in time. As you know, I have papers which will clear me of every charge that their malignity may invent. When I am in favour again I will let you know, and will present you to the queen and minister of war; at any rate you will like a rest at home before you set out for the Netherlands, so there will be plenty of time.”

The next day Jack took his place on the coach for Southampton. He arrived there after fourteen hours' journey, and put up at an hotel for the night. The next morning he dressed himself with greater care than usual, and started for the well-remembered shop in the High Street. He knocked at the private door, and enquired if Mistress Anthony were in.

“Will you say that a gentleman whom she knows wishes to speak to her.”

Jack was shown into the parlour, and in a minute or two Mrs. Anthony appeared, looking a little flustered at hearing that a grand-looking officer wished to see her. Jack advanced towards her with a smile.

“Why, Jack!” she exclaimed with a scream of delight, “is it you?” and the good woman threw her arms round his neck and kissed him as if he had been her own son.

“Of course we got your letters,” she said, “telling us how you had been made an officer and then a captain. The last letter we had from you was from Italy, telling us about that great sea fight, and that you were coming home, but that’s eight months ago. We knew you were with my Lord Peterborough, and we saw in the *Intelligencer* about his being in Germany, and last week they said he had come home. We were talking about you only yesterday, and wondering whether you would come down to see us, and whether you would know us now you had grown such a fine gentleman, and being written about in Lord Peterborough’s despatches, and accustomed to all sorts of grand society.”

“You knew I would,” Jack said; “why, where should I go if not here? And Alice is quite well, I hope, and grown quite a woman?”

“Not quite a woman yet, Jack, but getting on.” She opened the door and called Alice, and in a minute the girl ran down. Her mother saw that

she had guessed who the caller was, for she had smoothed her hair and put on a bright ribbon which her mother had not seen for three years, and which Jack himself had given her. She paused a moment shyly at the door, for this young officer, in all the glories of the staff uniform, was a very grand figure in her eyes.

“How do you do, cousin Jack?” she said coming forward, with a bright colour and outstretched hand.

“How are you, cousin Alice?” Jack said, mimicking her tone; “why, you little goose,” he exclaimed, catching her in his arms and kissing her, “you don’t suppose I am going to be satisfied with shaking your hand after being nearly three years away.”

“Oh, but you are so big, Jack, and so grand, it seems different altogether.”

“You are bigger than you were, Alice, but it does not seem in the least different to me.”

“Well, I thought you would be quite changed, Jack, and quite different, now you are a captain, and famous, and all that; and you have seen so many grand ladies in all the countries you have travelled that—that——” and she hesitated.

“Well, go on,” Jack said gravely.

“Well, then, that you would have forgotten all about me.”

“Then you are a very bad little girl, Alice, and not half so good as I thought you were, for you must have a very bad opinion of me, indeed, if you thought all that of me.”

“I don’t think I quite thought so, Jack. Well, I told myself it was only natural it should be so.”

"We will argue that out presently," Jack said; "and now, where is Mr. Anthony?"

"I will call him, Jack," Mrs. Anthony said. "You have no ill feeling, I hope, towards him, for you know he really has been very sorry about the part he took in getting you away, and has blamed himself over and over again."

"I never have had," Jack said; "it has been the best thing that ever happened to me. If I had had my own way I should still be working before the mast instead of being a captain in the army."

Mr. Anthony was soon called in from the store. At first he was a little awkward and shy, but Jack's heartiness soon put him at his ease.

Jack stayed a fortnight at Southampton, and then, on the receipt of a letter from the Earl of Peterborough, went up to town, where he was presented to the queen and afterwards to the minister of war by the earl.

A week later he and Graham sailed for the Netherlands and joined the army of the Duke of Marlborough, and served under that great commander until, three years later, the war was brought to a conclusion. They were attached to the staff of one of the generals of division.

The duke kept his promise to the Earl of Peterborough, and kept his eye upon the young officers. Both distinguished themselves in the hard-fought battles in Belgium, and the end of the war found them both colonels. There being no prospect of further wars the army was greatly reduced, and Jack was retired on half-pay, and as soon as matters

were arranged in London he again made his way down to Southampton, and at once asked Mr. Anthony's permission to pay his addresses to his daughter.

The ex-mayor consented with delight, and, as Alice herself offered no objection, matters were speedily arranged. Jack's half-pay was sufficient for them to live on comfortably, and Mr. Anthony, in his gratification at a marriage which he considered did him great honour, presented her with a handsome sum at her wedding, and the young couple settled down in a pretty house a short distance out of Southampton.

Jack was never called out again for active service, and lived in the neighbourhood of Southampton until the end of his long life, buying a small estate there, when, at the death of Mr. Anthony, the handsome fortune which the cloth merchant had made came to his daughter, subject to an annuity to Mrs. Anthony, who took up her abode for the rest of her life with her son-in-law, her daughter, and their children.

For many years Colonel Stilwell sat in Parliament as member for Southampton, and maintained a warm friendship with his ancient commander until the death of the latter, in 1735.

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